



# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Berta Dreyfus School**

**Middle School 049**

**101 Warren Street  
Staten Island  
NY 10304**

**Principal: Linda Hill**

**Dates of review: December 12 - 13, 2007**

**Lead Reviewer: Elizabeth Owens**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Berta Dreyfus School is a middle school with 951 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 44% Black, 29% Hispanic, 17% White, and 10% Asian students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 89.3%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 72% eligibility.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school administration has developed sound systems, which enable students to learn in a safe environment.
- The principal sets a high priority on mutual respect, and is supported in this by her able and committed assistant principals.
- The school has been creative in improving attendance and punctuality.
- The organization into three academies led by assistant principals enhances the range and scope of teaching and learning.
- The students value the educational opportunities, both academic and social, that are offered to them.
- Special education students and high performing students are well served.
- Technology and science are well-developed content areas.
- The administration makes good use of data systems to support student learning.
- The classrooms and corridors are displayed with an excellent range of student work and instructional aids that set high expectations.
- Student portfolios are well-managed tools for monitoring progress.

### What the school needs to improve

- Continue to develop initiatives to further minimize disruption and engage students in learning.
- Establish confidence among all teachers in using data systems to support planning for instruction.
- Extend student opportunities for differentiated learning.
- Involve students more effectively in goal setting and in evaluating their progress.
- Develop the arts program to energize learning and facilitate further celebration of talent and diversity.
- Continue to work energetically and strategically to involve parents in the life of the school.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is proficient.**

Berta Dreyfus School serves its community well. The principal and her team of assistant principals take a strong lead and control the school environment impressively. From the intellectually brightest to the neediest, all students are provided with a generally broad and interesting curriculum. However, a broadening of the arts curriculum are improvements, which both parents and students said they would welcome. Behavior and attendance patterns are a constant challenge, which the school is working energetically to resolve. Mutual respect is gaining ground and the students know that they can come to school and be safe and focused on their studies. Their progress is closely monitored and they feel appropriately challenged but their lack of ability to articulate their individual goals limits their progress. The organization of the school into three academies invigorates the curriculum and enrolment, and nurtures vocational awareness. A number of organizations make significant contribution to the well-being and life chances of the students.

The school has made organizational changes to decrease teacher-directed instruction since the last review. Two period blocks, introduced where possible, are facilitating greater flexibility in teaching style and the staff have received professional development in planning for differentiated instruction. Coaches and lead teachers model small group instruction and work alongside teachers to give them confidence, although there is still some way to go. Using the computer adaptive program to group the students, successful collaborative work goes on in special education, English language learning and science. English language learning has now been aligned with English language arts, and this and a more inclusive approach to special education are improving opportunities for these students. In English language arts, the project-based learning and literature circles are also organized in groups. Parents feel that communication has improved and that the school is now “on top of the situation” in giving them accurate and helpful information.

The inquiry team has identified 16 students who are representative of the bottom third, for whom neither attendance nor behavior are an issue. A thorough analysis of their needs has resulted in the development of aids to the testing process and support in skills such as phonics, syllables, vocabulary, prefixes and suffixes.

### How well the school meets New York City’s evaluation criteria

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the student’s progress over time.**

#### **This area of the school’s work is proficient.**

The data specialist, one of the assistant principals, manages data systems to provide useful information in a clear and accessible way for all staff. Supported by a technical specialist, she has trained the lead teachers and coaches. They in turn are helping

teachers who are starting to use the data to plan learning that better matches the needs of students. Although technology workshops are enhanced by the excellent on site facilities of the magnet student technology program, not all staff are yet able to use the system “to drill down data” and manipulate the available information to fully inform planning.

Departmental assessments and subject portfolios containing samples of work assessed against rubrics aligned to the standards follow the same format so that the administration knows in detail what teachers are teaching and what students are learning by subject, class and grade. Performance portfolios and grade 7 promotional portfolios celebrate completed assignments. The school analyzes data each year to measure its own and the performance and progress of individuals and groups of students. It compares its performance with other local schools to note why they may be more successful in certain aspects. For example, it is comparing data for every student in inquiry science with a local Brooklyn school. Data management facilitates the alignment of English language learners with mainstream students in English language arts. The school responded to data analysis that identified some differences in achievement of some ethnic groups and of boys and girls by grouping boys for reading and girls to address self-esteem issues.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student’s next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student’s learning.**

**This area of the school’s work is proficient**

The teachers are using the computer adaptive program to define student goals which are regularly monitored by the administration. These are discussed during daily conferencing with students and supported by rubrics, which are attached to pieces of work and stored in portfolios. Despite this, students are not generally clear what their goals are or how they will achieve them. Periodically teachers meet with the assistant principals, the coaches and the teaching teams to analyze student work and set instructional goals for improvement. Class composition is data driven and grade-appropriate goals are set using curriculum maps created specifically from data identifying student weaknesses.

Holdover students and other “at risk” students are carefully monitored and supported in regular pupil personnel team meetings. Targeted support in general is based on proficiency ratings and is focused on “mending reading” and helping with homework. There are suitably challenging goals and instructional expectations of special education students. The curriculum for special education students and for English language learners successfully includes them in mainstream opportunities.

Parents are generally satisfied that the school communicates its aims clearly. They receive regular letters with advice about upcoming tests, information on student progress and invitations to a wide variety of school events. They are asked to contribute to a daily report card when necessary and know their children’s strengths and weaknesses through requested discussions with teachers and four progress reports and four report cards per year. The school is engaging a very good core group of parental support. The timing of parent teacher association meetings restricts some parents’ ability to attend and so is limiting the widening of parental membership and participation. The administration knows that a lot more needs to be done to reach a greater proportion of the parent population. A representative group expressed great support for the school and had many suggestions for further involvement.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.**

**This area of the school’s work is proficient.**

The principal puts a high priority on mutual respect. She is supported in this by her able and committed assistant principals. The school’s distinctive student population is being well served by this emphasis. Discipline issues are a constant challenge and so staff put huge efforts on resolving disputes, which threaten a calm learning environment. Patrolling the corridors and monitoring the use of the restrooms reduces disruption, but it remains a considerable difficulty. Parents approve the systems the principal has established but would like to see her “pop up more often in classrooms” to impact directly on some disruptive elements that remain.

Each of three assistant principals leads an academy and this organization provides scope for an interesting curriculum. The academies are the Academy of Journalism and Media Studies, the Academy of Environmental Studies and the Academy of Science and Technology. The magnet technology program attracts motivated students who have an interest in advanced technology with course work that includes robotics, digital photography and animation. Science is a strength, with an inquiry approach generating sound hypothesizing and secure knowledge of the scientific process and key vocabulary. Rubrics link scientific writing with literacy goals. The classrooms and corridors are displayed with an excellent range of student work and instructional aids, which celebrate the aims of the school community. A representative group of students made clear that they value the educational opportunities, both academic and social, that they are offered.

The special education program is aligned with every department and the students are given full support in achieving ambitious and inclusive goals in line with the expectations for general education students. The honors and magnet classes appropriately challenge higher achievers and, in the best practice, support individuality by skilful questioning. Enrichment opportunities include music and sport that give some variety and breadth to the curriculum, but there is insufficient emphasis on the arts. Wise budgeting has reduced the size of general education classes and made possible the recruitment of four additional social workers and a guidance counselor. Attendance is an ongoing challenge for the school. In partnership with an attendance and intervention and dropout program, support in making home contact, and providing small group and individual counselling are bringing about significant improvement. A 6.00am sports opportunity has successfully enticed students from their beds so that after an hour of sport they are present and punctual for the start of the school day at 7.22am.

**Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

**This area of the school’s work is proficient.**

Administrators monitor the quality of instruction regularly and use this knowledge of individual teacher’s areas for improvement and staff requests to guide professional development planning. The instructional team of coaches and lead teachers support teachers with important teaching strategies including their understanding of the use of data, connections between subject areas and group teaching. They arrange for teachers to gain in expertise from colleagues with greater experience. Teachers are encouraged to share best practice by inter-visitations, and at faculty conferences. The administration

organizes professional development and specialized training programs for new staff and for established teachers on classroom management. The administration knows which members of staff are struggling with classroom control and continue to monitor and support all teachers to become totally effective. This emphasis has contributed to a school-wide improvement in behavior management, with staff moving away from a dependency on reactive approaches.

The school administration has developed sound systems, which are beginning to promote consistency in student instruction and student safety. The six-day curriculum cycle safeguards Mondays, and an early morning strategy meeting of the administration prepares them for any untoward events that might take hold. The composition of classes wisely responds to the data and distributes challenging elements and the ability spread. Systems support effective guidance intervention for students struggling with social and emotional issues. An additional guidance counselor and four social workers, the school's partnership with "Partnership with children" and the initiation of "Clinic Plus" with Staten Island mental health are scaffolding improved safety and support for student personal development. The school enjoys a unique and productive partnership with the College of Staten Island (Gear Up), which allows the magnet students to attend a two-week science and technology summer camp. Selected students are trained to be part of a national computer technology group and they repair and maintain the three computer labs, the seven laptop carts and ten Smartboards. "Gear Up" effectively supports behavior management, parental involvement and enrichment activities. The new library is to be paid for by a generous donation from a local councilor.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The principal is completely committed to the success of the school. In three short years, she has achieved an enormous amount of progress. She is all embracing in attitude and in readiness to give what it takes. She has a clear vision and high expectations of herself, her team, parents and students.

The school makes effective use of its computer adaptive program to plan next steps. Weekly administrative, instructional and inquiry team meetings track the growth of all students. Periods for common planning time, grade, departmental and academy meetings are embedded into the program. Portfolios are checked on a monthly basis and are well-managed tools for monitoring progress. Departments' constant evaluation of assessments using the computer adaptive program aids speedy data analysis and facilitates the tracking of student progress. Changes to the curriculum, and instructional strategies and organizational practices are recommended from this base. The coaches are key elements in the process of analysis, evaluation and modification of interim goals. They share these with teachers during meetings so that instructional programs can be adjusted. The goals agreed at the summer retreat and included in the Comprehensive Education Plan are updated if necessary on occasion during and at the end of each academic year. This enables the school to keep the long-term view for improvement in mind when it monitors and reviews the work of individual departments, grades, classes and the progress of individuals and groups of students.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: The Berta Dreyfus School</b>	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>			X		

### Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?			X		
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?			X		
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?			X		
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?			X		
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?			X		
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?			X		
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?			X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			X		

### Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?			X		
2.2 focus on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area?			X		
2.3 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?			X		
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?			X		
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?			X		
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?			X		
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?			X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			X		

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.**

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?			X		
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?		X			
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?			X		
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?		X			
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?			X		
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?		X			
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance?			X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X		

**Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction?			X		
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?			X		
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other's classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another's instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?			X		
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?			X		
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?			X		
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning?			X		
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X		

**Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

To what extent do . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school's plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.2 the school's plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?			X		
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?			X		
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to make strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?			X		
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan's interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X		