



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Benjamin Franklin School

Elementary School 55

450 Saint Paul's Place

Bronx

NY 10546

Principal: Luis E. Torres

Dates of review: November 26 - 27, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Melanie Spears

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Benjamin Franklin is an elementary school with 704 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 41% Black, 58% Hispanic and 1% White students. The student body includes 22% English language learners and 16% 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 92.6%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 93% eligibility.

Benjamin Franklin is the only school in the City of New York that serves three distinct communities' populations. The students of Benjamin Franklin live in Butler, Morris, and Webster housing authorities. The school places a priority on safety and security of its students and works hard to keep the challenges of the surrounding community from impacting its operation.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has established cultural norms and a clear sense of purpose to define the interactions between students, teachers, and parents.
- The principal's emphasis on building relationships in the community has improved school safety.
- The principal's open-door policy and effective communication skills have built an environment of mutual trust between all staff, students, and parents.
- School procedures enable the staff and parents to support student learning and discipline.
- The principal's strategic use of the building, budgets, scheduling, and hiring has boosted the school's capacity to reach school goals for accelerating student learning.
- The Teachers College demonstration lessons support the school's efforts to align data with strategic lesson planning and instructional delivery.
- The school is sharing whole-school goals with the all members of the school community.
- Data is used well to gain an understanding of the progress and achievement of individuals and groups of students.
- The Montefiore clinic provides students and their parents with information about how they can improve their health.
- Looping is developing teachers' skills and their capacity to challenge students.

What the school needs to improve

- Identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement in English language arts.
- Ensure consistency in differentiated instruction across all curriculum areas.
- Establish a faculty-friendly benchmark document with success criteria for interim and long-term goals to ensure alignment with effective measures of student outcomes.
- Increase teachers' proficiency in assessing available data for their classes.
- Focus supervisory observations on student learning.

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.

The principal has effectively reorganized the school's administrative team to distribute leadership. These organizational changes have improved the monitoring and support of instructional programs across the school. Benjamin Franklin School is showing strong gains in math and minimal gains in reading. The newly hired literacy coach has provided much needed support to teachers in primary grades. Now, the school has two literacy coaches serving all grades in a balanced manner. The principal has implemented a range of procedures and initiatives to provide a safe and secure environment. Some of these include the safe room, administration assigned to specific grade/classes to respond to discipline and classroom management incidents, and a partnership with Montefiore Clinic to provide wellness services to students on site. The school is committed to improving health and safety in the school.

Data collection is developing and is used well to target instruction for all students, particularly special education students. Benjamin Franklin has more special education classes than similar schools in its network. The principal allows teachers to loop with their students and focus on the class goals to improve student outcomes. The newly implemented inquiry team has received some training and has begun to use these new skills to examine data, already noticing discrepancies in data collection figures. The inquiry team's discoveries are allowing the school to make timely corrections and adjustments to its program. The data specialist and the principal are posting data walls around the school to improve the use of data in decision making.

Last year's Quality Review improvement areas have been addressed appropriately. The principal has hired new staff to expand support in English language arts and purchased curricular materials to develop the school's work. All leaders at the school are more involved in strategic planning due their new roles and responsibilities coupled with regularly scheduled strategic planning meetings. Teachers have received the goals for the school, but in fragmented pieces. The principal is aware that the school's goals are not outlined in a uniform document that links each goal with assessments, tools, timelines, and success indicators and plans to take action over this. At present, the school lacks consistency across the grades in terms of differentiated instruction. The principal and the cabinet are aware of the refinement needed to develop differentiated instruction.

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 school has a well-developed range of data to support teachers. It includes curriculum-embedded diagnostics, assessments of reading level, state assessments, and attendance data. Teachers document information clearly relative to each student, grade, and subject area. Staff members compare past and present performance by student, class, and grade. Teachers maintain thorough individual student assessment binders. These binders follow students from one grade to the next. Teachers provide students with helpful individual feedback in conferences. Students walk away with a clear picture of their strengths and next steps for improvement in reading and math. These goals are noted in teacher conference logs. School leaders review these conference logs well to monitor progress across the school and adjust support to teachers.

The principal and the newly formed inquiry team have established effective systems to disaggregate data. The school is sorting and examining data by gender, ethnicity, special education and English language learner groups. The principal and the cabinet monitor effectively initiatives developed to target various student groups and successfully adjust support to teachers and students using accurate data.

Administrators thoroughly review teacher records and data summary sheets to identify individuals and groups of students who need targeted support. Several students are scheduled to exit special education. The school plans to use the new Acuity system to develop primary assessments and sort them in the same manner as the upper grade assessments. The data specialist is also working to get more teachers to use the new electronic scanner to develop and process data results from teacher-developed assessments. The scanning of teacher-developed assessments is planned to advance the school's disaggregation of data and improve its ability to detect strengths and weaknesses in student performance more accurately. School leaders are still working to train teachers to retrieve data from the citywide assessment system. At present, the school is not getting the most out of similar-school data to improve student achievement in reading.

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.

Teachers are collaborating at a more detailed level through the good organizational structures already in place. The inquiry team has targeted bilingual Hispanic at-risk students and is currently rolling out goals and plans for their improvement. The reorganization of assistant principals' duties has increased the range of services available to students identified as English language learners by designating one assistant principal as responsible for planning, monitoring, and revising school compliance for English as second language (ESL). Grade level and instructional support team meetings use ongoing discussions of academic performance based on data. Beginning this academic year teachers use data with students to record individual goals in classroom conference

logs. The school's effective process of targeted use of data continues down to the student level.

Planning and support for English language arts and math is improving. The school is showing significant growth in math in all grades. However, planning in reading still requires significant adjustments to support the students with the greatest need. The school progress report is providing parents with good information to involve parents in goal setting in order to accelerate their child's learning. The school is already noticing higher attendance on testing days.

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 school leaders have successfully filled gaps in the curriculum and instructional materials to ensure students can acquire necessary skills and knowledge. These include the adoption of Words Their Way and the continued use of Teachers College writing. This year Teachers College provides professional development to the staff. Teachers note this as strength because it helps with clarification of practice and the trainers share alternative assessments that help them differentiate instruction. The school has identified key strategies for teacher use across all subjects. Teachers have state and local documents that outline scope and sequence. Teachers regularly review interim and formative assessments. However, differentiated instruction and grouping is not consistent across grades. Teachers describe themselves as using data more this year than in the past, and all agree that they appreciate the available data.

School leaders have ensured that teachers have the effective tools for powerful instruction. The principal has purchased enough content materials and supplies to ensure teachers will be able to differentiate for English language learners, special education, low-achieving, and high-achieving students. However, support to all content areas has not yielded consistently rigorous instruction across the school. The classes with better student engagement, according to students, are math and science. Students report that they like writing assignments because they can write about things that interest them. Coach and supervisor support varies, leading to inconsistency in accountability for good teaching and the absence of clear benchmarks. The emphasis on the learning environment is obvious, as all classrooms are print rich and students displayed good behavior. The school leaders are aware of the need for supervisory focus on learning that would tailor feedback to teachers and accelerate student learning. Staffing changes have occurred and school leaders are in the process of implementing consistent practice across all grades. At present, teacher accountability is not at its potential resulting in inconsistent engagement across all grades. The arts enhance the curriculum with after-school offerings that include ballet, hip hop, martial arts, cheerleading and clubs.

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 well developed.

The principal has greatly enhanced the school's capacity with new additions to the faculty. He recently hired a highly qualified primary literacy coach, a certified teacher to run the

new safe room, a male guidance counselor, and male African social worker. The school's outreach to students, teachers, and parents most in need of support has improved because these staff members have expertise in teaching, professional development, social work and the African culture. The principal effectively used data to guide his hiring of these new staff members. As a result, primary grade teachers receive targeted, job-embedded professional development in reading and the large population of boys enrolled in the school receives targeted support that has already reduced behavior infractions.

The school provides well-developed support for teachers. These include grade meetings and instructional leadership team meetings, Teachers College writing demonstration lessons, supervisory data conversations, "lunch and learn" study groups, and Saturday workshops. There are regular supervisory observations, but these do not focus sufficiently on learning as well as teaching.

The principal took the entire staff on a weekend retreat to work on how to become a community with a risk-free environment. The principal leads the new teacher Saturday workshops to cover teacher-requested topics and areas of improvement revealed through his observation of classrooms. The school schedule provides time for common preps coupled with a wide range of collaborative settings that are used well. Teachers are using data more in these collaborative settings, sharing promising practices, and sharing their expertise.

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 school has established a meaningful approach to school improvement planning. The cabinet meets regularly to review school goals and plans and to make adjustments to strengthen the school's work. Currently, however, the data used across the grades in these conversations is not uniform enough. The school lacks a laser-like focus on monitoring and planning as a whole to ensure everyone has ownership for each student's progress.

The school has adequate interim and long-term goals in place that are linked to a range of curriculum programs and state and local assessments. However, the communication of these goals and the varied supervisory methods for monitoring teacher and grade progress are too fragmented. At present, a formalized teacher action plan is not in place to support supervisory monitoring of teacher goals. The principal is aware that the school does not have a faculty and teacher-friendly benchmark document to improve adaptation of plans and practices for meeting goals. The school also does not make mid-course corrections to improve overall monitoring of grade, class, and school plans. As a result, it is difficult for the school to ensure the outcomes of the goals set for student performance.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Benjamin Franklin School (X055)	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
Quality Score			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		
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			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		
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4				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		
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X		