



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Elizabeth Barrett Browning School

Middle School 399

**120 East 184 Street
Bronx
NY 10468**

Principal: Angelo Ledda

Dates of Review: May 19 - 20, 2008

Lead Reviewer: William Stroud

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Elizabeth Barrett Browning is a middle school with 746 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 21.6% Black, 76.3% Hispanic, 0.3% White, and 0.9% Asian students. The student body includes 29.2% English language learners and 10.3% special education students. Boys account for 58.4% of the students enrolled and girls account for 41.6%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 89.4%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 89.3% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Administrators and teachers work collaboratively and create opportunities for sharing effective practices and improving the quality of instruction.
- The school makes good use of a wide range of data to track the progress of English language learners and special education students.
- Clearly articulated procedures are shared with the school community to enable it to run smoothly and effectively.
- Teachers effectively implement the workshop model to organize and differentiate learning activities to meet the needs of students.
- Frequent classroom observations have resulted in a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of teachers' instruction.
- Effective partnerships between the school and outside agencies extend learning opportunities and provide support services for students.
- Leaders use resources well to accelerate the progress of students in greatest need.
- The school community is well focused on its future and plans effectively for suitable changes.

What the school needs to improve

- Set interim target goals for student learning with appropriate timeframes for measuring success and making adjustments.
- Coordinate grade-level and content area curriculum mapping to create a continuum of skill development and subject knowledge.
- Provide professional development opportunities that move instruction from process learning to deeper content knowledge.
- Develop teachers' ability to use students' assessment results to identify and plan instruction.
- Develop systems of communication that enable parents to be better informed about their child's performance, progress, and learning goals.

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 and his leadership team have been effective in providing a clearly articulated direction and plan for the future development of the school and bringing the faculty on board. A highly positive and collaborative culture exists in the school. Teachers share best practices on a regular basis to establish a workshop model of instruction throughout the school. Staff members share the desire and intention to extend the focus of instructional planning from process learning to deep subject content knowledge. The curriculum does not yet clearly indicate the progressively development of skills alongside content knowledge. However, the leadership team has established the correct priorities for development and set the agenda for improvement. They have created a safe and effective learning environment, aligning resources to address the goals of the school improvement plan, developing the use of data to inform curriculum and instruction and building capacity to improve professional practices. Preliminary data indicates the school will be removed from the “persistently dangerous” list it was placed on in July 2007.

The school is making a determined effort to address stagnant, and in some grades, declining performance data. Administrators and faculty are focusing on the use of data in more systematic and collaborative ways to ensure that they organize curriculum and instruction responsively to meet the diverse needs of learners throughout the school, in particular the high number of English language learners who are now making good rates progress. Teacher feedback to students is more evident and better aligned to the individual needs of students than previously.

Faculty reflect consistently on the changes that have been implemented throughout the school in order to evaluate interventions and improvements, but goal-setting is not yet sharp enough to enable the school to respond quickly to interim data or celebrate its achievements against specific success criteria.

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 made good progress in the way in which it collects, collates and uses data to track the performance and progress of individual students, classes and grades. Teachers regularly use multiple data sources, such as predictive and interim

assessments from Acuity, formative and summative classroom assessments and conferring logs, to form an understanding of what students know and are able to do. The administration and faculty look closely at the progress of special education students in self-contained classrooms and English language learners in order to evaluate the way learning is organized for these students and its impact on their progress.

Data analysis and its implications for improving instruction are consistent priorities in collaborative work and in tracking the progress of cohorts of students. The development of student portfolios and conferring logs in some subject areas is beginning to have impact, promoting greater consistency in the way teachers use data to plan instruction for different groups of students. Teachers use formative assessment data to engage with each other in shared lesson planning. However, there are still inconsistencies in the way some teachers track student progress and performance over time.

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 principal and his assistant principals have taken good account of all available information in determining yearlong whole-school goals. They have created clear action plans to support these goals. The close collaboration between the cabinet, literacy and math coaches, the data coordinator and inquiry team members allows staff to share information effectively to set and regularly review school based instructional goals for student performance and progress. Programs and procedures are in place, focusing on the implementation of effective interventions for students at most risk of underachieving. Teachers maintain authentic student work in each subject area in student portfolios. These are reviewed by teachers who conference regularly with students to provide feedback about their learning. Data is also gathered from in-class tests and projects to inform instruction. Teachers generate rubrics and use them to provide clear guidance and feedback to students on their achievements. However, they do not identify consistently the next learning steps, or involve students in their own self-assessment. Success criteria are sometimes not specific enough to be measured.

Parents are regularly encouraged to become more involved in their child’s learning. They express appreciation for the school’s supportive learning environment, but state a desire for more information and greater frequency of communication about their child’s progress towards specific interim-learning goals. Currently parents do not regularly share information relevant to their child to support academic and social progress.

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.

Administrators and faculty have successfully created a culture of professional collaboration in the school. Resources for the development of curriculum units are shared by teachers within a subject area. Essential questions are used as a thread to

create coherent teaching and learning experiences during daily lessons, and for use in unit study. Teachers make decisions based upon student work, allowing them to provide instruction effectively to meet the needs of each student. The literacy development program, Read 180, is an effective tool that teachers and students use to set specific learning goals. The work of the school inquiry team has focused on improving math skills in number and operations for a targeted student group. The main aim has been to improve the differentiation of instruction. Good progress has been made in determining the social-emotional needs of these students and their learning challenges, and the use of manipulatives has been introduced in their after-school program. Less attention has been given to more systematic changes to classroom practices in order to more widely improve instructional practices and learning outcomes.

Teachers meet weekly by grade and subject area to examine instructional practices and coordinate improvement efforts. Through the consistent and regular analysis of data at these meetings, administrators and faculty hold themselves accountable for their students. Data is used to plan content and skill development, and to create lesson plans that meet individual student's learning needs. Students in many classrooms are engaged in the use of assessment rubrics to evaluate their own learning. Leaders have spent much time thinking creatively to acquire and align available resources and personnel with the identified academic goals for students. The consistency of routines and expectations has also resulted in an environment where there is a high degree of respect and trust present throughout the school, and attendance and punctuality have improved.

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.

Administrators build teacher leadership by involving them frequently in decisions about curriculum, instructional priorities and professional development. Classroom inter-visitations occur often and teachers use peer observations to provide feedback about what is working and not working in teaching and learning. Staff members examine student tasks through a lens of "academic rigor" to determine an appropriate balance between challenging goals and students' abilities. This collaborative work between administrators and faculty has resulted in the implementation of a consistent workshop instructional model in classrooms and established a foundation for inter-visitations and the sharing of best practices. The principal and assistant principals build consistency of practice by promoting professional teaching standards focusing on the impact of instruction on student learning. Using focused observations the principal develops clear plans with differentiated goals and professional development to address and improve the quality of each teacher's instructional practices. A three-tiered, differentiated professional development plan for teachers has been put in place to improve instruction across classrooms. An effective system to introduce new teachers to the workshop model has been implemented, and new teachers are teamed with experienced staff in order to provide support and to develop better professional practices.

Students feel safe and express appreciation for the care and encouragement that is demonstrated by their teachers. The school has created an effective Social Emotional Team in partnership with outside agencies, and works consistently to create a supportive

learning environment for students. The team has developed a Resource Manual and Resource Guide that serve as a resource for other schools in the region. Students, however, express concern that the in-school suspension system is ineffective in addressing the behavioral issues of some students and needs to be rethought.

This year the school has developed effective partnerships with community-based organizations to extend the breadth and depth of learning opportunities and to promote more respectful interactions between students. Students who participate in the Student Council and Operation Respect have demonstrated leadership in the school community by establishing a welcoming committee for new students and visitors to the school and organizing events to promote a more respectful and positive learning environment. Strong partnerships with outside agencies such as Bronx Arts Ensemble, The Leadership Program, Youth for Real, ENACT, and Turn Around for Children have enhanced learning opportunities for students and provided training programs to expand student leadership. Student suspensions have decreased significantly from last year.

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 has a clear vision for the school's development for next year in order to set high expectations and better support the academic development of students. Staff members are committed to that vision, understand the reasons behind the planned changes and support them. There are multi-foci for the future. The school plans to develop a math-science academy to improve teaching and learning in these subjects. To develop student leadership, the school will use New York City leadership standards. Leaders plan to continue their work to create a safe and supportive learning environment in every classroom. The school has begun to gather information generated from multiple data sources to define curricula goals, create flexible grouping, and to track student performance and progress on a regular and consistent basis. A goal has been set to look at the learning strengths and challenges of each student by administering pre-assessments for units in each subject area.

Teachers have done a good job of developing rubrics in some subject areas to better identify next learning steps and include students in their own self-assessment. Specific, measurable goals with interim learning targets for each student are not yet part of this process, nor is there a plan in place for evaluating the success of modifications to instruction and teachers' instructional practices. Therefore, the school leaders have not been able to evaluate effectively the impact of the school's improvement plan's impact on teacher practice and student learning.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Elizabeth Barrett Browning School	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 rigorous, 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 and tardiness?				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, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				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 makes 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

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped