

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

Benson School

Elementary School 200

**1940 Benson Street
Brooklyn
NY 11214**

Principal: Javier Muñiz

Dates of review: February 25 - 26, 2009

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Benson School is an elementary school with 1201 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 3% Black, 18% Hispanic, 47% White and 32% Asian students. The student body includes 19% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 94.3%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 62% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The principal, who is in his first year, promotes a strong vision for the future of the school and a spirit of collaboration among staff, children and parents. The school collects, analyzes and uses a wide range of data to understand and meet the needs of students. The current school goals are clear, relevant, measurable and achievable in English language arts, math and science. The school is beginning to develop goals in the other core subjects, but this is not consistent throughout the school.

School leaders use their lesson observations to affirm good quality teaching and learning where it occurs, and to offer feedback and advice on how to make improvements where required. Coaches also provide support to teachers, and mentor new teachers to improve student performance. The school is developing lab sites to allow the modeling of best practice to take place. Teachers also take part in teacher performance review and the principal shares his vision of restructuring this system to provide consistency in accountability throughout the school, introducing an accountability piece and benchmarks for the various projects throughout the year for the teachers. At all opportunities, the work of the school is about helping teachers to promote effective learning for students. Teachers meet and plan during common planning time. However, time is currently not available for discussion among grades to align best practices throughout the building. The inquiry team has a clear focus on subgroups of students and is moving towards establishing individual goals for each student to improve student performance. The team's aim is not only to ensure their research impacts positively on the learning of those students, but that the work of the team is turn-keyed across the school. Teachers respond positively to the professional development, particularly in differentiation, and look forward to participating actively with their colleagues to improve instruction, which creates a community of learners.

The school is very well organized and the budget reflects the needs identified by data analysis. Goal setting for the whole school is a major focus in English language arts, mathematics and science. Music and art weave their way through the entire curriculum in every subject area in an interdisciplinary approach to teaching and provides a wonderful school environment. The school is continuing to look at their high performing students to continue the work that has started in some classrooms. Parents feel welcome and take an active role in many events conducted at the school. The school has a website to inform parents of upcoming events, school policy and goals. The work of the parent coordinator is a model for parent outreach, providing many workshops and events for parents throughout the year and developing a culture of mutual respect and positive attitudes toward learning throughout the school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a clear vision for the future of the school and ensures that the school provides resources, efficiently organizes and effectively schedules to maximize learning opportunities and improve teacher and student performance.
- The school collects, analyzes and uses a wide range of data to understand and meet the needs of students.
- The school delivers an engaging curriculum that has a strong focus on the arts.
- The inquiry team focuses on improving student performance and it has identified subgroups of students to monitor while using strategies to improve their learning outcomes.
- The school has established excellent communication systems with students and their families to improve student performance and attendance.
- The school enjoys a number of partnerships with community agencies to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students and maintain a culture of mutual respect and positive attitudes toward learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to increase student achievement and engagement for high-performing students by building on the good work already started, continuing to look at learning styles, enrichment programs and the use of technology by teachers and students.
- Formalize the professional development plans with interim benchmarks for all teachers to improve differentiation of instruction and more closely address the learning needs of all students.
- Build on the collaboration of teachers, not only on grades, but among grades as well, to address and identify learning trends throughout the building to improve academic outcomes.
- Extend current good practices to ensure that all students have rigorous and measurable goals in all core subjects

Part 3: Main Findings

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school regularly gathers and analyzes a wide range of data that creates a clear picture of students' individual needs. However, the school does not yet analyze data in all subject areas or identify the needs of all subgroups. Each classroom teacher gathers data on each child in reading, writing and math. Teachers analyze grade and classroom data on common planning periods once a week, providing them with an opportunity to adjust curriculum mapping. The administration collects the binders four times a year and provides feedback to teachers on student goals. The major school goal focuses on improving the learning outcomes of English language learners and children with special needs. The school currently has an after-school enrichment program that runs in cycles, providing higher-performing students with test sophistication and enrichment activities driven by the student's interest. This is done in response to the results of their current report card, which indicated a lack of movement for higher performing students.

The school currently approaches teaching English language learners in three settings: an English as a second language push-in model; a dual language class; and Russian bilingual gifted classes, which is a citywide program. The school's data indicates that the push-in English as a second language model is achieving exceptional results, closing the achievement gap for those children.

Families and students receive and share information on a school webpage. Parents indicate the ease with which this enables them to communicate with the school, especially if they work long hours. Parents receive individual student goals in reading, math, writing and science at the end of units. In addition, there is an automated telephone system to inform parents of students' attendance and lateness.

School leaders use a number of tools to organize and analyze school data. An ongoing Excel spreadsheet looks at English language learners and their progress throughout the year. Teachers receive professional development to enable them to pull up data from a variety of sources. Children access Acuity results to track their goals in reading and math in grades 3, 4 and 5. In kindergarten through grade 2, teachers use running records to benchmark children's progress and provide them with next steps. However, individual teachers develop their own assessments and, as a result, there is no consistency among teachers and grades.

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

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Teachers establish goals for all children in kindergarten through grade 5 in reading, writing, math and science. Goal setting is beginning in social studies. In grades 3, 4 and 5, parents receive progress sheets that each student creates with the help of their teacher, indicating their progress toward meeting goals and how parents can assist them. The same approach takes place in kindergarten and grades one and two, using a simple format listing the unit skills and having the child write their name where they know they need assistance. This consistency shows the benefit teachers on these grades gain from planning together. Professional development takes place for all teachers in differentiation of instruction according to content and modality. Implementation in the classroom is in the beginning stages and teachers indicate they enjoy the professional development and look forward to the sessions. The school has a classroom lab site for modeling differentiation, which teachers visit. School leaders feel they are seeing a consistency in classroom environment, where teachers set up various meeting areas for their children. Much progress is evident in this approach and every classroom uses a workshop model. enabling teachers to differentiate and children to engage in various activities.

The school report card drives overall school goals, which drive teacher goals. The principal and assistant principals monitor teacher progress through formal and informal observations, as well as hosting meetings with teachers throughout the year to see their progress and offer support where needed. School leaders send administrative items in a memo to teachers and use faculty conferences to discuss goals and provide professional development, thereby validating goal setting and high expectations as a major goal of the school. The principal indicates that the teachers enjoy professional development that requires their active participation to build collaboration, rather than passive professional development. Parents receive the inquiry team's newsletter and are aware of the school's movement toward goal setting.

Rubrics are on all children's work and are consistent throughout the building in English language arts, mathematics, and science. School leaders and staff communicate high standards for all. School policies are posted on the school web site, including all goals for reading, writing, math, science and technology. Children receive awards for academic progress and attendance to boost confidence and self-esteem. The school hosts theme days, such as Friendship Day, to build school spirit and develop a positive learning community.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students' learning goals.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school does curriculum mapping in literacy, math and science. New York State standards appear in all classrooms in children's own words. A strong arts program weaves its way through all curriculum areas. Children who demonstrate exceptional interest and talent in the arts take part in enrichment through violin classes, recorder classes, chorus and art club. The YMCA hosts an after school program, and the Neighborhood Improvement Association and Kaplan all provide varied learning

experiences for the children. All teachers have assessment binders, which school leaders monitor four times a year, to record student progress. Grouping, differentiation of instruction and goal setting in science, math and English language arts are visible in all classrooms. Teachers in kindergarten and grade 2 have a template for children to write their goals and share these with their families, indicative of the planning that is taking place as a grade for these teachers.

The principal makes creative use of funding to host a Saturday Academy for beginning and intermediate English language learners. The academy not only focuses on academics, but enrichment in gym and the arts. The school has two science and social studies clusters for the early and upper grades, which allows a concentration in those grades to work individually with teachers and students. Data analysis of second grade students indicates the need for additional intervention and the school has a part-time academic intervention teacher who works closely with the second grade teachers to assist children in meeting their goals and to differentiate instruction. SMART boards are in most classrooms and the principal will be purchasing additional SMART boards to increase the use of technology in lessons for all teachers and students in all classrooms.

School leaders continually see a need to build school community and there is a beautiful tone throughout the building of mutual respect, providing children with a risk-free environment in which to learn. The guidance counselor hosts workshops for parents on Saturdays in mental health. The parent coordinator focuses on parent outreach and parents, regardless of ethnicity, feel welcome and comfortable in the building. On a recent literacy night with over 200 people in attendance, parents received the necessary tools and strategies to become effective partners with the school to improve their child's performance.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Mentoring takes place for new teachers to demonstrate best practice. Through formal and informal observations, school leaders monitor teachers' strengths and weaknesses. This drives professional development, in addition to teacher request. Differentiation of instruction is a major goal of all teachers. Some teachers take part in teacher performance review in the place of the formal observation, but the principal feels that this needs to be structured differently and he has plans to monitor this process next year, establishing benchmark goals to measure success toward June professional goals. Currently, the teacher performance review focus does not align itself with overall school goals to improve academic outcomes.

The inquiry team is highly functional and is currently in phase two of its inquiry work, which is visiting classrooms and looking at targeted children in conditions of learning. This year, classroom teachers join the inquiry team to discuss the findings of low inference transcripts. According to teachers, the process is more effective this year because more classroom teachers are involved to share their knowledge of the targeted students. The team distributes a newsletter to all staff, so they can see the various strategies of the team. This assists staff to implement those strategies, which may be useful to them with students that may be having the same learning challenges in their class. This newsletter also goes home to the parents always providing them with an update of what is happening in their child's school. In addition to the target population of English language learners and special education children, beginning this year, the team targets high-performing students in an after-school program for test sophistication and

enrichment, capturing another subgroup in need of making progress. Teachers make good use of common planning time and this is evident in grades 2 and 5, where collaboration is evident in classrooms, specifically in establishing goals and providing differentiation to children. Although not apparent in all rooms, teachers are moving in this direction throughout the building.

The school enjoys a number of outside collaborations with the YMCA, Heartshore, the Jewish Center, Washington Mutual Bank and Carnegie Hall. The Guidance Counselor brings in outside agencies each month when conducting various workshops for parents to receive community support.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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.

School leaders look at assessment binders for teachers four times a year and offer support and feedback. Assistant principals try to monitor goals on the grades they supervise throughout the year, although there is no formal structure for reviewing goals to assure the school that implementation is taking place in every classroom;. The pupil progress meetings, which occur once a month for every class in the building, provide opportunities to discuss additional variables that affect academic outcomes.

The principal intends to monitor each teacher's progress in meeting student goals to provide greater accountability to address student academic outcomes and, as a new principal, he is working towards this end. Those teachers needing support receive help from the coaches who keep a log of the assistance they provide. Teachers visit colleagues at other schools that implement best practices in order to improve their own instruction and share with teachers on their grades during common planning time. Teachers benchmark all goals at the end of each unit in English language arts, mathematics and science, giving children next steps to assist them in reaching their June goals. The school is beginning to set goals in social studies and the principal intends to use the same format in the other core subjects, since the teachers are comfortable with the process. All children throughout the building receive next steps in English language arts, math and science as is evident by rubrics displayed on children's work in classrooms and in the hallways. In grade level meetings during common planning time, teachers revisit lesson plans and curriculum mapping to vary pacing based on need.

The school currently operates on an eight-period day, which provides additional periods for academic intervention for remediation. The principal intends to revisit this program to align it to his overall vision of providing enrichment, as well as remediation for children. He also feels the additional time spent with children in this setting needs an accountability piece, which he plans to introduce next year. This will ensure that teachers are moving children towards their June goals and benchmarking their progress throughout the year.

Most of the staff at Benson School express positive feedback about the new changes the principal has implemented. At every opportunity school leaders have, they provide staff with additional planning time, in addition to providing funding to purchase appropriate resources, thereby building a community of respect and collaboration among school leaders and staff.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Benson School	Δ	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?			X	
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?			X	
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?				X
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?			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 student’s learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?			X	
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			X	
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?				X
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DY0, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

To what extent do ...	Δ	➤	✓	+
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?			X	
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?			X	
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?				X
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent do school leaders...	Δ	➤	✓	+
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?			X	
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?			X	
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?			X	
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X	

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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 and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?			X	
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?			X	
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?			X	
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X	

Quality Review Scoring Key							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed