

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

Benjamin Banneker Academy

High School 670

**71-77 Clinton Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11205**

Principal: Majida Abdul-Karim

Dates of review: March 3 - 4, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Charlene Jordan

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Benjamin Banneker Academy is a high school with 868 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 82% Black, 13% Hispanic, 2% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes no English language learners and 1% special education students. Boys account for 40% of the students enrolled and girls account for 60%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 88.7%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1.

Overall Evaluation

This school is underdeveloped with proficient features.

Benjamin Banneker Academy has established a culture of success focused on high expectations for student achievement within a warm, welcoming, and respectful learning environment. The new principal, an open and accessible leader, is supported by a collaborative staff. The principal places great emphasis on meeting the academic, social, and emotional needs of students. Staff members take great care to ensure that students have access to standards-based Regents level courses, as well as a wide range of Advanced Placement and College Now opportunities. Students benefit from a strong partnership with community organizations promoting social activism and service learning. Students and parents alike express enthusiasm for the wide range of arts and extra-curricular activities that last far beyond the school day. Parents are welcome in the school and encouraged to participate. There is ongoing communication between parents and school staff regarding student progress. This openness ensures that students do not get lost in the school and reinforces the strong partnership between home and school. The school is conscientious in using data to plan interventions for specific groups of students. The inquiry team, for example, has been analyzing and recommending intervention programs to support students identified as not accumulating 10 or more credits in a school year. However, the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data, and monitoring the progress of all individuals and groups of students over time are at an early stage.

The school is implementing professional development on differentiated and facilitative models of instruction. The principal and assistant principals visit classrooms regularly to provide support to teachers. The collegiate staff is interested in improving their effectiveness in the classroom. The school does not yet use whole-school student assessment data to set differentiated and measurable learning goals for individuals and groups of students or to meet individual teacher's professional development needs. The analysis of January Regents' data revealed specific skill areas that the principal and staff are targeting to improve the overall performance of students on standardized tests. A similar data analysis process led administrators to provide professional development to teachers of Advanced Placement classes in order to increase scores of three and above. The school does not yet set whole-school goals and specific interim benchmarks and timeframes derived from student achievement data for the development of specific student and teacher learning goals. The principal, however, has a clear vision for how to involve the cabinet and teachers in moving forward with whole school planning.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school emphasizes a culture of success, with high expectations for student achievement and college readiness, underpinned by effective support and enhancement programs to meet the needs of all students.
- A strong focus on youth development and positive connections to adults ensure that students' academic and personal growth is well supported in school.
- The work of the Inquiry Team has led to targeted academic and socio-emotional interventions resulting in improved achievement in the target population.
- The principal's high visibility and accessibility to students, parents and staff has a positive impact on the school and there is an impressive climate of mutual trust and respect.
- A positive, collegiate approach among teachers provides fertile ground for future innovation and professional growth.

What the school needs to improve

- Maximize the use of data to clearly identified patterns and trends in student performance for all subgroups and consistently use this information to make strategic organizational and instructional decisions.
- Implement a strategic whole-school development plan, with clear structures and processes for the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data to result in effective monitoring of the progress of individuals and groups over time.
- Ensure that school leaders and staff establish explicit learning goals for all students, and that parents understand the next steps and timeframes involved.
- Develop and implement a school-wide plan for rigorous instruction and professional development that supports teachers in setting goals, differentiating instruction and monitoring progress, and provides opportunities for sharing expertise.
- Involve staff in the monitoring and revision of school plans and goals to improve outcomes for teachers and students.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

The school now uses data from the Progress Report, scholarship summaries and diagnostic and formative assessments to plan strategies for targeted interventions and enrichment activities. After reviewing graduation data, special education and content teachers began discussions in common planning time to increase the number of students with disabilities that earn Regents diplomas. The school added an additional Advanced Placement class this year in global history, in response to reviewing Progress Report data. An analysis of math test data is leading to increased collaboration among teachers seeking to refine instructional practice to meet student needs.

The school is beginning to analyze Regents data and target particular skill areas to enable students, particularly those in grades 9 and 10, to take and pass the English arts language and other Regents exams earlier and move on to Advanced Placement classes. The work of the Inquiry Team, highlighting the need to keep ninth graders on track with credit accumulation, resulted in guidance counselors visiting ninth grade classes regularly to discuss college and career readiness and goal setting. Students across all grades cite the importance of obtaining high grades in their courses as a prerequisite to college success. Special education teachers and other staff convey areas of need and strengths to general education teachers and program students to enhance their learning opportunities. These are the positive outcomes of increased attention to data.

Communication with families on student progress is ongoing and consistent, and trusting and respectful relationships are strengths of the school. Parents appreciate the ongoing communication with the school and the opportunity to give and receive information about their children's progress. Teachers use a computerized mark analysis system to track student progress on formative and summative assessments. Students and parents receive training on how to access the information. The school has formed interdisciplinary teams that have held initial meetings to share cross-curricular concerns. However, these teams have not yet formalized their meeting structure or plans for moving forward.

The plan to develop clear structures and processes for the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data to monitor the progress of individuals and groups progress over time is in the early stages. For example, the school is only beginning to address gender differences in Regents' performance, as well as develop strategies to increase the number of students who achieve a grade of 85 or higher on standardized exams across all subgroups.

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 school is conscientious in using data to organize support and intervention strategies for specific groups of students. For example, instructors of Advanced Placement classes receive ongoing professional development in effective instructional practices to increase the percentage of students receiving a score of three or higher on the Advanced Placement exams. Students failing one or more classes attend peer tutoring, Saturday school, or after school support. Teachers use diagnostic assessments, mock Regents exams, rubrics and writing assignments to plan intervention and curricular enhancement programs. School leaders and faculty have aligned class goals with State standards. However, the principal and staff do not consistently use the analysis of ongoing assessment information to establish explicit learning goals, with interim checkpoints, for all students. This means that many students and their parents do not fully understand the next steps in learning or the timeframes for the achievement of goals.

The principal, teachers, staff, parents, and students agree that this school’s culture is one that emphasizes clear and high expectations for success. Students say that they are encouraged to “think college”, and teachers help them prepare by assigning work that involves research, writing, and deadlines. Students work in groups and teachers encourage them to reach out to each other for assistance as well as to come for extra help and tutoring. Students indicate that they enjoy coming to school, and teachers and administrators work collaboratively to attend to academic needs.

Parents are involved in the school leadership team and work closely with the parent coordinator to increase parent participation and encourage parents to attend the many workshops and activities sponsored by the school. Parents cite the Summer Bridge Program for incoming ninth graders as an effective strategy to help students and their families understand the culture of high expectations. In addition to high expectations for student achievement and preparation for college readiness, the principal and staff provide numerous forms of support and curricular enhancement to help students reach their goals.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

The school offers a wide range of core content area courses, including Regents’ level, Advanced Placement, and College Now courses, as well as the arts, technology and shop classes. Teachers are encouraged to use their personal and professional expertise to enhance applications of learning. For example, the wood shop teacher is working with students to develop bats for the baseball team, and science classes regularly use project-based learning, such as fictitious crime scene investigations, to increase the relevance of lessons. Professional development, focused on facilitative models of instruction, is beginning to have an impact on how teachers group students in classes to maximize learning. This work, however, is still in the early stages and presently, teachers do not develop specific learning goals and differentiated instructional

plans for individual students. The collaborative staff does make effective use of common planning time and departmental meetings, enabling them to reflect on instructional practice and focus on subject-specific curricular alignment to State standards. The school has not yet developed a school wide plan for coherency in instructional approaches that enable students to set and reach specific learning goals in every class.

The principal and assistant principals are strategic in the organization of the school to optimize student access to high-level courses and staff indicate that they have the resources needed to deliver instruction. Students are clear about the need to do well in school in order to be prepared for the rigors of college. However, differentiation and specific learning goals for both the highest performing students as well as those that struggle lack consistency across grades and subject areas.

An impressive culture of mutual trust and respect supports the academic and personal growth of all the students. Students and teachers treat each other respectfully in and out of the classroom and the principal is a model for this trusting environment. Parents and students cite the open door policy that characterizes their positive relationships with administrators and staff. This school emphasizes a culture of success for all students, within a supportive and caring environment.

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.

The principal and assistant principals utilize a common protocol for observing lessons and providing feedback to teachers in oral and written form. The emphasis on facilitative instruction, evidenced by flexible student groupings in many classrooms, is beginning to impact on how teachers plan more student-centered activities. The administrative team is developing a focused plan on how to help teachers analyze and use data to improve instruction, although this work is in the early stages.

Professional development discussions take place during common planning time and department meetings. Teachers have been reviewing data on the lowest third of students and these meetings now focus on developing intervention and instructional strategies to improve credit accumulation for this group. January's scholarship data is already showing a slight improvement in credit accumulation for the lowest third. All teachers who are new to teaching or new to the building receive a mentor to support them with planning and instruction and to orient them to the professional focus on facilitative learning and to acclimatize to the school's culture. Teachers have the opportunity to visit other schools and each other's classrooms, but there is no formal inter-visitation structure to enable teachers to benefit from colleagues' expertise. The collegiate approach among teachers has the potential to provide fertile ground for innovation and continued learning and collaboration, particularly in the use of data to improve instruction and project based and interdisciplinary assessments.

The work of the Inquiry Team serves as a promising example of how administrators and teachers are collaborating to improve student performance with a target population. Analysis of the data of the lowest third 11th graders prompted the team to develop specific academic and socio-emotional intervention strategies with the aim of improving credit accumulation. Guidance counselors schedule student and parent conferences, as well as specific interventions, for any students failing two or more classes. The data on

this group is encouraging, and the team's recommendations resulted in a pro-active approach to monitoring the progress of 9th and 10th graders more closely. The school leadership plans to provide opportunities for the team to share their approach and findings with the full staff in June.

The strong network of support within the school and the community has considerably enhanced students' academic and personal development. Students perform service to encourage activism and citizenship and the school has productive partnerships with a number of organizations, such as Africa Tours and Global Ambassadors. Student clubs and activities meet the needs and interests of the school population and enhance the family atmosphere of the school.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

The principal has a vision of where she wants the school to be in two years, focused on 100% graduation and college acceptance rate to four-year schools. The assistant principals, teachers, and staff are beginning to work collaboratively with students and their families to achieve this goal. The school's self-evaluation provides an accurate and honest reflection of the current state of school planning. The administration is still in the process of developing a school-wide plan for establishing, monitoring, and revising school goals to improve outcomes for teachers and students. The principal has begun involving staff in committees to improve the effectiveness of organizational and professional development decisions on student achievement. For example, the attendance committee's work resulted in an audit of the attendance policy. The introduced procedures ensure that the school does not miss recording students' attendance and a community worker makes home visits. As a result, attendance continues to improve and is close to the 90% mark.

School leaders and faculty examined Regents passing data in January and used the information from item analyses to establish content-based key ideas and goals for developing critical thinking skills. An analysis of math data is leading teachers to collaborate on how they will use information on student performance to influence instruction. In addition to tests, some teachers use writing prompts and project-based assessments to gauge student progress and make recommendations for curricular enhancement, as well as intervention programs for struggling students. Teachers are beginning to make strategic use of flexible grouping to differentiate instruction in their classrooms. Plans are in place to utilize the results of a survey administered by the professional development committee to increase learning opportunities within and across content areas to improve the use of data. The school's plan to work with teachers on rigorous and individualized goal setting in order to improve student achievement is a major emphasis of the principal's plan for continuing to improve the school.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Benjamin Banneker Academy	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, DYO, 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.

<i>To what extent do ...</i>	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.

<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	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.

<i>To what extent do ...</i>	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