

Quality Review Report 2009-2010

The Bergen Upper School

Middle School 571

**80 Underhill Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11238**

Principal: Santosha Troutman

Dates of review: May 19 – 20, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Gwen Stephens

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Bergen Upper School is a middle school with 210 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 79% Black, 16% Hispanic, 3% Asian, 1% Native American and 1% White students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 25% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 85.1%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Guided by her commitment to the students and community, a thoughtful and dedicated newly appointed principal places a high value on student performance and closing their achievement gap. In a short period, she has set and communicated high expectations, and established a learning community that builds upon trust, collaboration, and focuses on integrity, service and excellence. Since the last review, parents enthusiastically cite the school's success and are pleased with the principal and her staff that includes the parents as active participants in goal setting. Students like the new direction of the school and the support they receive in understanding their next learning steps. Everyone has high praise for the principal and her team.

Despite cutbacks, the principal uses the available budget strategically and makes organizational decisions that support the school's instructional goals and meet the needs of the students. New additions to the facility including a library and science lab support the school's vision of enhancing learning opportunities for students, and additional staffing, which includes specialists to support instruction, who enhance the school's program. A newly hired dean supports guidance services that connect families to individualized support for their children. Creative scheduling supports teachers meeting for common planning periods regularly. Teacher teams meet to look at student work, share best practices, set goals and revise lessons. There are displays of data throughout the school, providing an effective lens to track the school's progress toward its instructional and school-wide goals. Assessment data use is frequent, during teacher-team meetings to target small group intervention and identify differentiated strategies to use in the classrooms. However, although individual teachers use data to create effective lessons and utilize differentiated strategies, this practice is not yet consistent school-wide.

The principal and her team visit classrooms for formal and informal observations, and meet with teachers to discuss curriculum development, instructional and organizational decisions. The school does not make timely adjustments to curriculum and instructional and increase student performance to achieve maximum impact on structures and decisions.

The school has identified academic goals, and the focuses on a safe school, with enrichment activities for its students. The school has not strengthened this progress with broader outreach to community resources, foundations and partnerships, to provide positive support to the school environment as well as accelerate the academic, social and emotional growth of all the students

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and faculty use a comprehensive range of student data on a regular basis that enables tracking of students' progress on a school-wide level that informs instruction.
 - The principal and her team consistently run a variety of ARIS / ACUITY data and progress reports to disaggregate summative data that informs class placement and academic interventions. They follow-up with thorough analyses of periodic assessments and student grade data per marking period, and (daily/ weekly) formative data to identify school's strengths and areas of need. An aggregate summary of all data, visible on the data wall in the principal's office, allows for a detailed tracking of student performance on State standardized assessments measured against interim benchmarks.
 - The principal, to support her goal of a "data driven culture" within the school community, has created multiple opportunities across the school for data use, in a variety of venues, including inquiry and guidance teams, and cabinet meetings. This year, professional development on the effective use of data has resulted in teachers' maintaining detailed data-binders and notebooks that include a summative overview targeting on-going formative assessment results in each classroom. This level of detail has effectively supported teachers working with students who have individual education plans.
- A dedicated new principal communicates high expectations to students, staff, and parents, that motivate the community and sets a pace for school improvement through her vision of integrity, service and excellence.
 - There are high expectations on the part of all members of the school community with respect to behavior, attendance, student outcomes, and leadership. In addition, there are good procedures for the identification of students in greatest need of improvement, which is communicated to students and families. As a result, more students are eager to learn and parents are eager to participate and support the school. This year, parents supported the school with fundraising for the senior trip and activities.
 - The guidance support CARE team comprised of guidance counselors, social workers, the parent coordinator, and administrators, meets weekly to discuss and track individual student progress. This team creates individual education plans and includes parents as an effective opportunity for all constituents to be involved in structured forums that respond to areas of students' needs.
- Guided by student data, the principal and her cabinet make effective organizational decisions regarding the use of budget, resources, and scheduling that support the improvement of student outcomes.
 - The school creates multiple opportunities for teacher collaboration through innovative programming including block scheduling, and grade level and common planning periods that support teachers' analysis of student work, use of data, and preparation of lessons. A technology lab,

newly constructed library and science lab, reflect the use of resources to support the instructional program and broaden opportunities for learning.

- Additional staffing such as learning specialists, and coaches, who collaborate with individual classroom teachers, embeds on-going support for daily instructional decisions that support student needs. The hiring of a new dean has strengthened the student services and guidance support.
- The principal and her team have established a school-wide approach to goal setting, using SMART goals that reflect a vision to accelerate student learning.
 - Through her positive leadership, the principal has created a learning community that focuses on student outcomes by analyzing student data. During team meetings, and the school's leadership team meetings, there is discussion and on-going evaluation of these goals. At weekly team meetings, teachers revise curriculum maps, lesson plans and identify next steps. As a result, there is an increase in student outcomes.
 - The principal and assistant principal effectively involve and communicate with the school community during school-level planning process and have fostered a base of support for the school's direction. The understanding and urgency of the goal to close the achievement gap with school-wide achievement to make adequate yearly progress in English language arts, results in all stakeholders engaged in measurable and actionable activities toward this end.
- The school works closely and shares relevant information with parents and students to encourage improved academic performance, and thoughtfully engages them in a cycle of feedback designed to support school progress.
 - The school has increased its communication with families via phone messenger, newsletters, and backpack notices in several languages thus ensuring all families have access to relevant information. The school also sends home progress reports five times per year and supplements them with on-line tools for students and families, such as Engrade, to provide information on student progress. In conversations with students, they are able to articulate their learning goals and next steps.
 - The school offers families workshops in the use of tools such as ARIS Parent Link, and sets up guidance meetings to help parents learn how to support their child's achievement and help further school successes. Parent conferences and direct meetings with teachers, provide opportunities for parents to learn additional information about their child's progress on State exams, and the importance of regular attendance and on-time arrival.
- A majority of teachers meet on teacher teams in which they are engaged in structured collaboration that supports the common instructional focus of the school.
 - Teachers meet every day to discuss student data, curricula, learning strategies and assessments in order to improve student outcomes. The math department's central focus is to identify the weakest skills and develop strategies to address the teaching of these skills for students in grades 6, 7 and 8. After a thorough process of analysis, teachers

concluded that the number sense strand was the weakest area of student performance. The math teachers then successfully implemented a cycle of assessment, data review, re-teaching with new strategies, and reviewing student work. As a result, evidence shows increased student performance on interim assessments. This team supports the school with a wiki of its work, uses ARIS inquiry space, and models best practice for other departments.

What the school needs to improve

- Promote greater consistency in differentiated instruction so that all lesson planning and classroom routines ensure multiple entry points, promote critical thinking, and result in high levels of engagement.
 - This year, during professional development, teachers' received a copy of Carol Tomlinson's text on *Differentiated Instruction* to enhance their awareness of this strategy. At this time, classroom observations indicate that some teachers use differentiated instruction to engage all students and lesson plans reflect limited use of assessments to guide or evaluate learning. However, this practice is not consistent across the school. Further, teachers do not have with sufficient opportunities to see instructional practice both inside and outside the school, in order to explore different teaching strategies to support their practice.
- Expand the school's use of observation so that teachers receive relevant feedback, to improve the instructional practices in their classrooms.
 - The principal, and assistant principal, conduct informal observations on a regular basis. This team does not effectively reflect on teacher practice relative to student outcomes or engagement, and does not focus sufficiently on teaching strategies such as differentiation or critical thinking skills thus limited the effectiveness of the observation feedback.
- Adjust in a timely manner the systems and structures used to evaluate organizational resources, curriculum, and instructional decisions, ensuring that current practice is aligned to accelerate student learning.
 - School leaders spend time analyzing student outcomes. However, the school does not systematically review interim checkpoints throughout the year and consistently review the effectiveness of its decisions in order to adjust curriculum, modify instructional strategies or reflect on its allocation of resources.
- Develop a school-wide system for community outreach and fully explore all opportunities to strengthen partnerships with community agencies to garner support and resources for students and their families.
 - Currently the school has established relationships with Woodhull Hospital and the New York City Department of Education's Office of Youth Development that provide some support to the school in the area of services to families. However, these programs are not offered at the site and do not incorporate the range of needs to accelerate the personal and academic growth of all students at K571.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: The Bergen Upper School	Δ	▶	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	Δ	▶	✓	+
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			X	
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?		X		
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?			X	
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X	
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	Δ	▶	✓	+
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?				X
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?			X	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?			X				
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			X				
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?				X			
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X				
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?		X					
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			X				
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?			X				
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals 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 progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?			X				
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed