

# Quality Review Report 2010-2011

**John L. Bernstein School**

**Elementary School 137**

**293 East Broadway**

**New York**

**NY 10002**

**Principal: Melissa Rodriguez**

**Dates of review: January 10 – 11, 2011**

**Lead Reviewer: Daniella Phillips**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The John L. Bernstein School is an elementary school with 214 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 27% Black, 57% Hispanic, 2% White, and 13% Asian students. The student body includes 18% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 91.9%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- School leaders prioritize the observation of classroom teaching with frequent and constructive feedback and professional development that strengthens teaching practices.
  - School leaders are unafraid about making difficult performance evaluation decisions based on student achievement data and multiple visits to each classroom. As a result, all teachers acknowledge the school's high expectations for teaching quality and some faculty point to a 20% teacher turnover rate as important "growing pains" for school improvement. Administrators follow a rigorous observation schedule and offer sensible feedback to teachers. Additionally, the principal's weekly letter to faculty reinforces shared instructional beliefs and practices. Teachers note that school leaders provide effective instructional support that results in better consistency of teacher planning and reflection using student data.
- School leaders make well-informed and strategic organizational decisions that elevate coherence of practices.
  - Despite budget cuts, school leaders ensure that students receive broad exposure to visual arts, instrumental music, ballroom dancing, and recess enhancement activities. These enrichment offerings, supported by outside grants and collaborations, increase student engagement and interest and contribute to a 1% rise in student attendance so far this year.
  - The successful morning extended day program matches small groups of students with staff who work intensively on a specific strategy or skill for twelve-week cycles. By including every administrator, related service provider and classroom teacher, this targeted intervention program capitalizes on in-house expertise. Improved student outcomes from two completed cycles include a lower referral rate for Special Education evaluations and effective mastery by 70% of students of target skills.
- The school works closely and communicates important information with families that results in shared understanding about students' personal and academic growth.
  - Teachers and parent leaders considered pros and cons of standard report cards for communicating about students' learning progress and decided to switch to detailed narratives two years ago. Currently, parents receive two narratives during the year with key information about their child's academic and social-emotional progress, and a June timeline of benchmarks mastered and goals for next school year. Staff extend further outreach to parents via class newsletters, parent workshops, and school events, all of which leads parents to feel very satisfied about school communications and knowledgeable about ways to support children's learning at home. Parents cite ARIS Parent Link as useful and an impressive 82% of parents participate in the annual *School Survey*.

- Teachers engage productively in collaborative inquiry and robust professional development that sharpens instruction and nurtures teacher leadership.
  - All teachers meet twice each month with their inquiry teams to discuss students' performance in English language arts and plan collaboratively next steps. For example, second and third grade teachers focus on writing mechanics, while teachers in younger grades use poetry and songs to help English language learners strengthen their familiarity of sight words. Teachers of upper elementary grades are enthusiastic about efforts to promote "grand conversations," where students take the lead in understanding and explaining thoughts about text or math work. Teachers have re-structured lessons to practice this facilitative technique with evidence of deeper student engagement during these lessons.
- School leaders and faculty are reflective and committed to school improvement through thoughtful analysis of student achievement data.
  - Teachers, parents, and school leaders are knowledgeable about long-term student data trends, including persistent lower performance by English language learners. Through an active School Leadership Team, key stakeholders review the full range of instructional and organizational needs at the school and then set measurable goals as priorities. The Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) is collaboratively written and school leaders communicate openly about goals, progress and changes to action plans throughout the year, thereby ensuring increased ownership of goals.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Develop further curricula and academic tasks that promote higher order learning and rigorous thinking to better challenge all students.
  - Recent efforts to revise curriculum maps are a good start, but require more focused attention to promoting higher order thinking. Teachers receive flash-drives at the start of the school year with curriculum maps across content areas and then revise what are essentially units of study topics and pacing calendars as grade teams. More work is needed to monitor academic tasks to ensure that they challenge students at higher levels. Currently, across many classrooms, there are insufficient planned examples of multi-step problem solving and questioning that promotes critical thinking which explains the two-year trend of flat progress by many students in State exams.
- Strengthen expectations of differentiation in classroom teaching to maximize student learning.
  - There is a range of teaching practices across classrooms, with powerful examples of differentiation strategies in some classrooms and then very few in others. In some classes, there is no planning for altered assignments or extensions, which weakens students' engagement in lessons. A notable exception occurred in third grade, where students worked as teams to solve and explain challenging multiplication math problems with guided support that matched students' needs. In this and

most classes, there is good attention to multiple learning styles, as teachers vary instruction for visual, auditory, and kinesthetic preferences. However, a lack of complex and higher order skills assignments and class work in many classrooms produces uneven learning opportunities across the school.

- Extend the use of rubrics and other assessment data to adjust teaching practices and better meet students' needs.
  - Teachers' understanding of assessment data does not sufficiently impact their daily planning of instruction, including how teachers conference with students and how they plan small group work. For example, upper grade students missed most math questions about fractions, decimals and percentages on a recent Acuity assessment, yet conferring notes did not reflect this as a major focus. What teachers do very well is communicate with parents about students' learning profiles, and use assessment data to provide targeted support during extended day and academic intervention programs. Still, classroom instruction requires more attention to differentiating strategies. While some teachers use meaningful rubrics to provide personalized feedback for student learning, this practice is not yet widespread which limits its effectiveness.
- Monitor closely assessment of and teacher feedback on student work in order to improve consistency of expectations.
  - There is a developing practice of teachers using rubrics and other objective tools to evaluate and provide feedback on student work. Where rubrics are designed with student input and specificity, students know what next steps to pursue to advance their learning. However, too much student work receives generalized comments like "I see you are really working hard. Keep up the good work!", which provides students with no guidance about how to improve learning. Teachers keep track of unit and periodic assessments, as well as students' written work, and they share efficient and strategic ways of organizing student data. School leaders and several teachers have begun to revise assessments to align with Common Core standards. This collaborative effort has good potential to elevate consistency across grades of evaluating student work.
- Enhance opportunities for teacher teams to plan and learn together in meaningful ways and thereby increase instructional and leadership capacity.
  - Faculty collaboration occurs to good extent, especially given the challenge of a small school with substantial teacher turnover. The school offers adequate opportunities for teacher leadership, especially with the principal modeling facilitation of bimonthly grade team meetings and teachers leading inquiry teams and many professional development workshops. However, teachers seek more formal and strategic opportunities to meet and plan as teams. For example, no current inquiry team or study group focuses attention on math, which then limits consistency of math instruction across classrooms.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

<b>School name: John L. Bernstein School</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
<b>Overall QR Score</b>		<b>X</b>		
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?		<b>X</b>		
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?		<b>X</b>		
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?			<b>X</b>	
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			<b>X</b>	
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			<b>X</b>	
2.2 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?		<b>X</b>		
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends?			<b>X</b>	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			<b>X</b>	

**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>	UD	D	P	WD
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	

**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>	UD	D	P	WD
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	

**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>	UD	D	P	WD
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	

**Quality Review Scoring Key**

<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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