

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Berta A. Dreyfus

Middle School 049

**101 WARREN STREET
STATEN ISLAND
NY 10304**

Principal: LINDA HILL

Dates of review: December 13 and 14, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Elif Gure

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Berta A. Dreyfus is a middle school with 885 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 42% Black, 34% Hispanic, 11% White, 11% Asian students, and 1% other students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 27% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 90.2%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school cultivates a safe and respectful school environment that supports learning, encourages attendance, and enhances personal growth of students and adults. (1.4)
 - Active presence of the teachers in the hallways during passing ensures that students get to their classrooms in a timely manner. The small learning community structure established through three distinct academies allows for an assistant principal, guidance counselor, dean and a group of teachers to take responsibility for a manageable group of students and coordinate their academic and social emotional needs. Furthermore, through the school-based grassroots mentoring program, most adults in the school, including the principal, adopt a student and provide him or her with one-on-one mentor support to promote academic and personal growth. In addition to their mentors, students cite their assistant principals, teachers, the dean, and the guidance counselor as their point person for resolving their academic and personal issues. As a result of the collective efforts of the school community, the school's motto, "We learn, grow and succeed together," is beginning to come alive as evidenced by the 1.79 extra points earned in the attendance section of the 2010-2011 Progress Report.
- The school facilitates on going, two-way communication with students and parents regarding student progress towards school's expectations, building informed parental partnerships for increased student outcomes. (2.4)
 - A well-maintained school website serves as the primary vehicle for communication with parents and students regarding school and class expectations. Each teacher's webpage houses the course syllabi, homework assignments, teacher-made tutorials, and other resources including the ARIS parent link and a short ARIS user guide, for students and parents to access remotely. Student progress reports, posted online quarterly, enables parents to access information around student attendance, behavior, and academic achievement. Email accounts assigned to each student and staff upon entry to school allow for students and parents to initiate conversations with the school around specific student strengths, weaknesses and next learning steps, resulting in informed partnerships with parents that support student achievement. According to the most recent Learning Environment Survey, 91% of parents feel that the school provides them with information on school expectations and offers appropriate feedback on their children's learning outcomes.
- The school has developed professional supports and partnerships to increase its internal and external capacity, fostering academic and social emotional growth of students. (4.4)
 - The school provides monthly professional development to teachers and staff on the Positive Behavior Intervention Supports framework (PBIS), a multi-tiered approach to prevention using disciplinary data and principles of behavior analysis, to develop school-wide, targeted, and individualized interventions and supports to improve school climate for all students. A specially designed after school program, Achieve Now Academy, offers overage students support to complete the units of study and assessments required for middle school promotion. Beacon, a year-round after school program, serves as a community resource in the school, making services available to students, parents and other

community members. . As a result, level three student infractions have begun to decrease this year as evidenced by the Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS).

- The school makes focused choices about emphasizing keys standards and plans to cognitively engage learners with varied needs. (1.1)
 - o The anchor common core standards in reading, writing, and research for college and career readiness frame the school's efforts to increase the depth and breadth of writing across the curriculum with particular emphasis on writing arguments, and explanatory texts. Integration of standards-aligned tasks involves at least two disciplines, providing ample opportunities for the application of the skills and processes to a performance-based assessment. Curriculum maps in English language arts, social studies, science, and math are organized around essential understandings and guiding questions and reflect planning decisions that aim to engage students with varied learning needs while emphasizing higher order skills.
- The school communicates high expectations for academic and personal growth to students and parents while developing supports to help them attain success. (3.4)
 - Parents report that they participate in workshops, and receive ongoing emails, phone calls, and letters from school staff and faculty informing them about the school's high expectations around student attendance, behavior, and academics. Students cite their teacher's constant encouragement and support as one of the reasons for their motivation to come to school and report that teachers make themselves available during their lunch and preparation periods to tutor small group of students. Guidance staff makes the specialized high school admissions process accessible for parents and students through workshops and one-on-one advisement, while the Gear Up program provides resources and materials for college awareness. As a result of the school's high expectations, increasing numbers of students take the exams and are admitted into specialized high schools.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase internal capacity to consistently differentiate pedagogy, to promote high levels of student thinking and work products across the school. (1.2)
 - o Although teachers collectively and individually engage in planning to differentiate teaching strategies and routines, as evidenced by lesson and unit plans, implementation of those planning considerations do not consistently meet the varied needs of learners, resulting in uneven levels of engaging students in cognitive thinking, classroom participation, and work products across the school. A math lesson included strong warm-up routines with questions of varied difficulty levels, targeting varied student needs. Similarly, a social studies class for high achieving students engaged students in meaningful thinking and discussion and purposefully selected primary documents in a teacher-led lesson, which employed varied questions posed to specific students. However, another social studies class for English language learners and special education students lacked student engagement and meaningful discussion due to surface level questions, non-authentic instructional materials, and lack of motivating learning activities, a pattern that is reflected in other classrooms. As a result of this inconsistency, some students are pushed to meet their full potential while others are not afforded the same opportunities to excel.

- Increase the alignment of resource use, hiring practices, student programs to the school's instructional goals to increase student outcomes. (1.3)
 - The school's priorities for a strong administrative team is evidenced through the use of its allocation for four assistant principals, three deans, a full time programmer and four guidance counselors, as a means to meet the needs of the student population. However, this current use of the budget does not include funding for instructional coaches and/or specialized teachers. Therefore this limits providing staff with job-embedded professional development and classroom support, and missed opportunities for suitable academic intervention and enrichment services for students.
- Support teacher efforts in the analysis of the student outcomes in order to modify instructional decisions for increased outcomes. (2.2)
 - o Although teachers individually and in teams spend considerable amount of time analyzing summative, periodic, and classroom level student data, they are not able to pinpoint and clearly articulate specific needs of student sub-groups by grade or class, limiting the usefulness of data in determining the effectiveness of instructional decisions. Furthermore, use of rubrics and checklists for peer and self-assessments during lessons, as well as other ongoing comprehension checks by teachers, are inconsistent across classrooms. Some classrooms show evidence of learning checks in the form of differentiated questions posed to specific students to gauge understanding while others only involve surface level questions that require a yes or no answer or a simple nod of the head, hindering teachers' ability to make immediate or timely adjustments to the lessons to ensure addressing student-learning needs.
- Develop focused school goals with a strong connection to data that are created in collaboration with stakeholders and supported by the entire school community. (3.1)
 - o Although goal setting and action planning occur at the school level, these processes only connect to broad data streams such as standardized English language arts and math test scores that are the framework for a surface-level needs assessment. This minimizes the potential for goal setting and action planning around all content areas to drive school improvement efforts and accelerate student learning. Both parents and teachers had difficulty articulating one or two short instructional goals of the school and communicated their need and desire to be meaningfully involved in the goal setting process as it relates to the development of the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP). The absence of comprehensive databased school goals, and action planning processes that engage all stakeholders, limits further improvements for increased student outcomes.
- Fully connect feedback from teacher observation cycles to the school's chosen research-based framework in order to make informed staff development and personnel decisions. (4.1)
 - o School leaders are beginning to support teacher development using classroom observation feedback, capturing strengths and challenges. However, although the school currently uses the Danielson framework to monitor effective teaching, feedback given to teachers does not make explicit connections, minimizing the clarity of expectations around standardized teacher practice. Furthermore, the school is beginning to work on building a system for managing staff development using the observation data and student work products in order to meet the

differentiated development needs of teachers. Currently, as such systems are not yet fully in place, decisions around professional development, assignment, and retention, are based on anecdotal evidence, minimizing their effectiveness to improve effective teaching practice.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Berta A. Dreyfus	UD	D	P	WD
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 as evidenced by meaningful student work products?		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	
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 Align assessments to curriculum, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?		X		
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?		X		
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students' progress toward school and class expectations?			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>	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 staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?		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, guidance/advisement 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, with particular attention to the CCLS?		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

UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed
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