



# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**John L. Bernstein School**

**Public School 137**

**293 East Broadway  
New York  
NY 10002**

**Principal: Melissa Rodriguez**

**Dates of review: January 18 - 19, 2007**

**Reviewer: Mike Doran**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Public School 137 is a pre-kindergarten through grade 5 community school located in the lower east side of Manhattan. It is one of two elementary schools occupying the same building and sharing facilities that include the auditorium, the cafeteria, the library and some specialized classrooms. Its current population of 257 is predominantly Hispanic (62%) and Black (27%), with the remaining students coming from Asian (9%) and other backgrounds. The school has 38 special education students, 15% of the school population and well above that of similar and City schools. The school has 38 English language learners, comparable with the proportion found in similar and City schools. The percentage of students that are Title 1 eligible is 78%, again comparable with that found in similar and City schools. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding.

The school has recently been relocated to its current shared building. The majority of staff moved with the school. Of the teaching staff, 86% have more than five teaching experience, and 36% had been with the original school for ten years or more.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The recently appointed principal provides very good leadership through her openness and accessibility, her clarity of vision and direction, and her determination to create a successful school.
- The principal is supported by an effective and committed cabinet.
- The parents hold the school and its staff in high regard.
- The school provides a calm, orderly, and safe environment to which students respond with behavior and attitudes to learning that are good.
- Teachers are very supportive of one another, and they are provided with a well planned program of professional development aligned to the needs of the school.
- The literacy and mathematics coaches provide effective professional support to the grade teaching teams.
- The academic program for students with special needs is good, and the school's academic intervention team, working closely with the pupil personnel team, provides effective support for students causing concern.
- The workshop model for teaching has been established across the school, and provides the basis for differentiated lesson planning informed by assessment data.
- A developing comprehensive arts program is central to the vision of the school and is providing a distinctive enhancement to the academic program.
- High expectations of staff and students drive the work of the school.

### What the school needs to improve

- Take account of the starting points of new students when enrolling in each grade, the longitudinal analysis of their progress through the school, and patterns of under-achievement, in the setting of goals, in monitoring the impact of the school's Comprehensive Education Plan.
- Extend the development of systematic and consistent formative assessment across all curriculum areas, aligned to standardized tests, to more effectively inform and adapt differentiated lesson planning and the setting of challenging goals, and to more systematically monitor the progress of pupils.
- Develop and establish more systematic and consistent systems and procedures for recording the historic progress and support for individual students to better inform receiving grade teachers and the school's intervention teams.
- Further develop the use of computer technology to support teaching and learning in the classroom, and the analysis and use of performance data to inform instructional and whole-school planning.
- Extend and enrich the curriculum and instructional programs to provide more effective programs for high-achieving students.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

**This is an undeveloped school with some proficient features.**

In the relatively short space of time since her appointment, the principal has been successful in giving the school a renewed vision and a sense of direction. She has rapidly put structures and procedures into place to establish a purposeful and supportive environment for students and staff. A standards-based professional development plan is already impacting on instructional delivery, and students are responding positively to better planned, structured and engaging teaching, informed by the developing use of performance data.

Areas for improvement identified in this report are essentially concerned with the need to put into place systems and procedures for the more effective gathering, analysis and use of student performance data across the school, in order to more effectively inform planning, goal-setting and the monitoring of progress at the classroom and whole-school level. This process has begun, driven by a committed, determined and energetic principal, and needs to continue at a growing pace, supported by appropriate professional development.

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

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.**

**This area of the school's work is undeveloped.**

There is considerable variation between teachers in both the collection and use of assessment and test data to inform lesson planning and the differentiation of instructional delivery. The principal has put in place professional development programs and collaborative grade conferencing arrangements in common prep-time to address this inconsistency and to develop the skills of teachers in making effective use of data.

The Teachers' College has been supporting teachers in the development of formative assessment in reading and writing, and similar professional development needs to focus on mathematics and the other areas of the curriculum. There are not yet agreed and consistently implemented school-wide systems and procedures for assessment and recording in the classroom. This is needed to more effectively inform the adaptation of lesson plans to meet the needs of individual students and specific student groups, and to plan appropriate intervention support. The use of technology to support teachers in their management and analysis of assessment data is an area of development for the school.

A recent development has been for each teacher to submit a detailed narrative on their class using the available assessment data to identify students' strengths, areas for development, and next steps in their learning. Teachers have found the process to be significantly developmental, and see it as pointing the way forward for an on-going improvement in their use of data.

At the whole-school level, the monitoring of performance data has been largely focused on the overall and most recent standardized test result levels compared grade by grade with the previous year. The school is not yet generating or using data to compare the performance of specific student groups and gender differences in performance; nor does it take account of the starting levels of students on entry to each grade, the aggregated longitudinal progress of students and the distance traveled within each grade and subject.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student’s next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student’s learning.**

**This area of the school’s work is undeveloped with some proficient features.**

Teachers are not yet using data in a systematic and consistent way to inform planning for students’ next steps, setting challenging goals, and monitoring progress.

Teachers work in grade teams, supported by the literacy and mathematics coaches, to develop the curriculum, instructional programs and assessment. They reflect on and share practice to make improvements, and those new to teaching are well supported. The coaches play a valuable part in following through the professional development provided by the Teachers’ College, working with individual teachers and supporting grade teams in their planning.

The principal has high expectations and is determined that classroom practice must be of the highest standard. Teachers have high expectations of students, and a policy of zero tolerance has been established. Students respond well to this in class, showing enthusiasm and responsibility for their learning. Parents are kept well informed of their children’s progress through progress reports, report cards and teacher-parent conferences.

The school’s academic intervention team, working closely with the pupil personnel team, has established effective referral systems for identifying underachieving students, those causing concern, and those at risk. A wide range of support programs is in place to meet the needs of students causing concern. These include extended morning tutorial sessions in English and mathematics, an after-school “English as a Second Language/Academic Success”, and the “Don’t Laugh at Me” program run by the school’s social worker. At present, there is not a similar focus on extending the level of challenge for high-achieving students.

The special education team makes excellent use of assessment to continuously adapt their instructional and support programs in the classroom, using a wide range of teaching strategies to engage their students, and promote self-esteem and good levels of achievement.

The school communicates clearly with parents, involving them in their children’s learning. It provides a range of events for parents to introduce them to approaches to teaching adopted, and to linked strategies that they can use to support their children’s learning at home. Parents appreciate the ready access they have to staff and the timeliness with which teachers let them know of any concerns.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.**

**This area of the school’s work is undeveloped with some proficient features.**

The curriculum is well aligned with the mandated curriculum, aimed at maximizing the potential of every student. A developing comprehensive arts program is central to the vision of the school and this is providing a distinctive enhancement to the academic program. The principal places considerable emphasis on the quality of lesson planning and has established the workshop model across the school to bring structure to lessons and data-led differentiation to the instructional planning. Most development in this respect has taken place in English language arts teaching where small group work is providing closer and more focused assessment and support for students, such as guided reading. Teachers are increasingly accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes, responding positively to developments aimed at raising standards.

The budget is used to address identified needs. For example, the school recognizes the potential for using computer technology to support teaching and learning, and this is an area of development for the school, with resources targeted to support. Student attendance is now monitored closely and is pro-actively pursued through systems recently put in place by the principal such as an attendance committee that meets weekly to review and monitor progress. As a result, attendance is now in line with that of similar and City schools. Students are very appreciative of the principal’s zero-tolerance stance that has brought an orderly tone to the school and has created a safe environment in which to learn. Staff know and respect their students.

More informed use of data about student performance is now driving key decisions about the budget, resources, and staffing. The principal, working closely with her cabinet team, is rightly focusing the school’s funding on support for individual students, the professional development of staff, and on the school improvement strategies and goals identified in the Comprehensive Education Plan. The cabinet recognizes the need for more in-depth analysis of data, taking a longitudinal perspective to further develop their decision-making about the selection and deployment of the curriculum and resources of the school.

**Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

**This area of the school’s work is proficient.**

The school is now a calm, orderly and welcoming place. The principal and lead staff are well respected, providing a model not only of their high expectations of themselves, but also of their care and commitment to students and families. The principal, working closely with her cabinet team, carefully select staff using a range of criteria and procedures, such as modeling a lesson and demonstrating their ability to use data to inform their practice.

Professional development is well managed by the principal in consultation with staff, drawing on the school’s performance data. Newly qualified teachers, and teachers new to the school, confirm that the school provides a supportive professional environment. Conferencing in grade teams is an important part of professional development, providing a forum for planning interventions, collaborative teaching, and revising decisions in the light of new information.

The principal and assistant principal regularly and systematically observe instructional practice and provide feedback. This informs planning for professional development. The coaches follow through with professional support as appropriate. Teachers increasingly observe each other, and are pointed towards examples good practice by lead staff. Teachers College has been providing a major program of professional development for staff, focused on reading and writing. This is already paying off, and a similar focus is now needed in mathematics and other areas of the curriculum.

The school has promoted and established a wide range of partnerships. Examples include University Settlement and Virtual Y after-school programs that provide homework support, peer-mediation and conflict resolution. Programs promoting achievement include "Chess-in-Schools", "Everybody Wins Mentor Program", "NYU America Reads" and "Pace Student Teaching". The arts are supported by partnerships such as with the Lincoln Center, "Broadway's Rosie's Kids", and "Studio in the School". The school has also been successful in raising additional funds through the parent teacher association and through grants such as from "Parents as Arts Partners."

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.**

**This area of the school's work is undeveloped.**

Although good practice is evident in the teaching of English language arts, and in planning interventional support for students causing concern, the school recognizes that the extent of data-gathering and the depth of analysis is not yet sufficient, nor consistently carried out to fully inform planning at school and classroom levels. As a result, the setting of goals and the monitoring of progress towards them have been constrained.

Staff at all levels understand that they have responsibility for assessing and analyzing students' progress, for planning, for setting goals for students, and for evaluating and revising interventions according to need. However, the school also recognizes that this is not always consistently carried out by all staff, or across all areas of the curriculum.

Although there is no student council, students feel that they are listened to and their views are communicated through staff to the leadership of the school for consideration. The principal however, understands the value of giving students a more formal voice and is planning to establish a student council in the near future. Parents are generally satisfied with their role in the decision-making processes of the school through their parent teacher association and the school leadership team.

The Comprehensive Education Plan is emerging as a working document, regularly reviewed as a whole throughout the year through cabinet meetings and in the principal's discussions with particular teams such as the grade teams. The cabinet recognizes that the effectiveness of such planning will be greatly enhanced by future improvements to the gathering, recording and analysis of data to inform goal-setting and monitoring of progress.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

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|---|---|---|---|
| <b>SCHOOL NAME: John L. Bernstein School (PS 137)</b> | ∅ | ✓ | + |
| <b>Quality Score</b>                                  | X |   |   |

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| <b>Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.</b>   | ∅ | ✓ | + |
| 1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>                                 | X |   |   |
| 1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ethnic groups, English Language Learners, special education students*</li> </ul> | X |   |   |
| 1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>                       | X |   |   |
| 1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.                | X |   |   |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>  | X |   |   |

\* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

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| <b>Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.</b> | ∅ | ✓ | + |
| 2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.  | X |   |   |
| 2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.  | X |   |   |
| 2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.   |   | X |   |
| 2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.      |   | X |   |
| 2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.   | X |   |   |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>   | X |   |   |

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|--|---|---|---|
| <b>Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.</b>   | ∅ | ✓ | + |
| 3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.  | X |   |   |
| 3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.   | X |   |   |
| 3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.   |   | X |   |
| 3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.  | X |   |   |
| 3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.  | X |   |   |
| 3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.   | X |   |   |
| 3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.  |   | X |   |
| 3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.   |   | X |   |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>   | X |   |   |
| <b>Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>   | ∅ | ✓ | + |
| 4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.   |   | X |   |
| 4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap. |   | X |   |
| 4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.  |   |   | X |
| 4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.  |   | X |   |
| 4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.  |   |   | X |
| 4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.   |   | X |   |
| 4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.  |   | X |   |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>   |   | X |   |
| <b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>   | ∅ | ✓ | + |
| 5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.  | X |   |   |
| 5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.  |   | X |   |
| 5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.  | X |   |   |
| 5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.   | X |   |   |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>   | X |   |   |