



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Ramon E. Betances School**

**Elementary - Middle School 396**

**110 Chester Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11210**

**Principal: Arlene Feinberg**

**Dates of review: March 17 - 18, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Helen Donnellan**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Ramon E. Betances School is an elementary-middle school with 288 students from kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 62% Black, 25% Hispanic, 8% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 57% of the students enrolled and girls account for 43%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 83.8%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Students have a diverse range of disabilities including autism, learning disabilities, poor or no mobility, sensory impairment and some are medically fragile. The school has three sites and provides instruction for students in self-contained and inclusive programs. Students in self-contained programs are taught in classrooms with student to teacher to paraprofessional ratios of 12:1:4 and 6:1:1. Alternate assessments are used with the majority of students and standardized assessments with five students.

Since the 2007 Quality Review the school population has changed significantly as one site with nine classes of students was transferred to another school. Two classes for early childhood students have recently opened at a new site.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school provides a safe and caring environment which enables students to receive unified education and therapy services.
- The principal's expectation is for students to make academic gains and develop their personal and social skills.
- Staff know students well and record their development systematically.
- Effective and supportive relationships help parents to understand how to support their children as they develop.
- Curriculum content matches the individual needs of students, using a wide range of approaches and communication modes.
- The school is well organized to deliver the curriculum and accommodate the physical needs of students, their equipment and high numbers of staff.
- Effective relationships with related service providers and other agencies enable students and their families to receive unified services at the school.
- The school monitors and reviews instruction and implements modifications when needed without delay.
- Staff treat students with high levels of dignity and respect at the same time as encouraging independence in meaningful ways.

### What the school needs to improve

- Continue to develop ways of presenting information and assessment outcomes to make it easier for staff to access data on student progress.
- Establish a framework for teachers to evaluate the impact that professional development has on their instruction.
- Identify groups of similar students at other schools so that progress and performance can be compared.
- Extend school-wide planning so that the roles of staff are clear and their plans show the actions and interim goals they need to take.

## Part 3: Main Findings

### **Progress made since the last review**

The school has made some progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

### **Overall Evaluation**

#### **This school is proficient.**

The principal makes clear the school focus of providing every student with care and instruction and shows commitment to raising the standard of instruction. This is reflected in reviews of systems and data to provide more effective programs. There are school and student plans for improvement, but teachers do not have specific plans to show their actions and goals.

The school gathers data pertinent to the learning and developmental needs of its students and presents this at individual student level. The staff have received extensive training and support on analyzing data, but low levels of confidence mean they still rely on administration for analyses. The school has not sought groups of students with similar characteristics at other schools to make comparisons of progress. The large staff works closely together to plan and deliver instruction and develop parents as partners in their children's learning. Varied and interesting approaches help to engage students in their classes and teachers differentiate content well to match the needs of students. Teachers, related service providers and community organizations work effectively to extend and enhance the curriculum. Staff receive extensive professional development, but its impact on instruction is not formally evaluated. They treat students with high levels of respect and sensitivity in personal care and learning contexts.

The administration is dealing with the areas to improve from the 2006-2007 Quality Review. Coaches provide the faculty and individual staff with support in using data and data analyses to use in planning instruction. The format for gathering data on each student now ensures consistency across the school but it is too early to see an impact on learning. The principal provides all staff with a clear handbook and uses technology well to update this, so that staff at all sites have up-to-date information. The new parent coordinator has significantly improved the ways parents are involved with the school and encourages real partnership work.

The inquiry team works in different ways to explore how younger students behave and interact. Team members observe students in pairs, share their observations and then meet as a whole team. This protocol pinpointed the need for changes to intervention and more specific goals to deal with the particular needs observed.

## **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 the student's progress over time.**

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

The staff know their students well and now maintain assessment binders for each student that provide consistent records of their learning, communication, personal and social development. These are recently introduced and it is not yet clear how they will show progress as well as performance. Technology is underused by teachers to analyze and present data in easily accessible formats so that patterns and trends in progress can be readily seen. The progress of standardized and alternate assessment students is assessed at regular intervals, giving accurate information about their progress throughout the year. Details of social interaction and communication exchanges during lunch periods complement information from classroom interactions, so staff have a picture of student interaction in different situations.

The school uses data in limited ways to compare learning outcomes for different groups of students. This has identified little difference in learning outcomes for boys and girls, but a greater incidence of autism and significant behavioral issues in boys. The diversity of the student population stands in the way of extensive comparisons of progress and performance between different students or groups, but the school is careful to compare each student's rate of progress to track their development. The school has not identified groups of students with similar characteristics and needs at other schools, which limits opportunities to identify and share good practice.

The administration provides strong leadership for staff in interpreting data and providing them with meaningful analyses of assessment information. While staff have received extensive support in using technology and improving assessment processes, they have not yet taken responsibility to interpret and analyze data to show patterns in outcomes.

**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 principal has recently introduced a working group to increase collaborative working which has led to agreement on better ways for movement at the main site. There is no consistent process for the school's academic intervention teachers to liaise and plan with teachers in inclusion settings, which limits opportunities for unified programs. Systems for individual education plans ensure that data is used to routinely set goals for each student. The goals are appropriate and reflect the small steps that students make as a result of their disabilities. Teachers share the goals with parents as part of the formal review process and students receive information about what they need to improve that matches their level of understanding. The school tracks student progress, carefully monitoring for any indicators of regression as well as progress. The administrators use assessment data well to identify students with potential to move to less restrictive educational settings and an increased number of students are successful in this. Staff

have high expectations for students and structure programs with challenge to enable students to learn at appropriate rates.

One of the school's priorities is to improve partnerships with parents. The staff work hard to establish and sustain highly supportive relationships with parents and caregivers, giving them guidance on supporting learning at home and working together to deal with issues and concerns. Groups of parents now attend productive weekly lunch meetings at the school, which offer workshops and allow parents to form informal support networks. The recently appointed parent coordinator actively encourages parents to work with staff, share their concerns and work together to support students.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The curriculum is well structured and allows students to develop personal and social skills alongside their academic learning. Teachers use their knowledge of students and assessment information well to tailor curriculum content to the needs of individual students, often breaking down instruction into very small steps to make it accessible. When the same content is being taught to an entire class, teachers and paraprofessionals show skill and creativity in their use of a variety of devices, words and symbols and languages to allow each student to access it at the appropriate level. The principal uses innovative approaches to successfully stimulate and engage students, including sensory programs and pet therapy. The organization that delivers this program brings pets to the school twice each week to help students interact with the world beyond themselves. This is a major challenge for many of the most disabled students, but observations have shown that this therapy successfully supports them in gaining access to higher levels of interaction.

Staff show great sensitivity for the needs of individual students and treat them with dignity in dealing with personal care and learning situations. They encourage students to take responsibility and make choices, even though these may be very limited as a result of their conditions. Sensitivity is also seen in the way that the staff support each other and the whole school community following student bereavements. The administration is eager to improve instruction using the teaching standards. Staff are held accountable for instruction, attendance and enforcing school codes through consistently applied systems, which has led to some improvements in instruction. The school makes clear to parents the requirement to send children to school, and increased rigor in following up absences has resulted in a modest increase in attendance.

**Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

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

The administration ensures that staff at all sites receive professional development that is tailored to individual needs. Staff learn from each other through informal conversations,

observations and support new colleagues through an effective mentoring system. Coaches arrange some formal observations but there is no consistent framework for sharing expertise. There is no process for teachers to reflect on their professional development and show how it has improved their instruction. The written feedback following observations includes recommendations and an agreed-upon framework that relates performance to teaching standards. This is currently used as a checklist and is not being fully utilized to show relative strengths and give teachers examples of how they have or have not met a particular standard.

Many of the students use wheelchairs and mobility aids and others have complex and time-consuming dietary needs. These are carefully factored into schedules so that feeding and social skill programs are integrated in meaningful ways while instructional time is maximized. Staffing, scheduling and groupings for students take into account the high numbers of support staff, equipment, plus time for personal care, feeding, nursing and medication and instruction.

Teachers work closely with paraprofessionals, school aides and related service providers to provide high levels of appropriate support for instruction and care for students. The school has strong and effective working relationships with 37 different related service providers to meet the diverse needs of students at all sites. This supports the delivery of unified programs for instruction, care and therapy and allows each student to develop holistically. Community-based organizations enhance the school programs well through sponsorship of after-school programs and by enhancing the curriculum through the music and pet therapy programs.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for 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 proficient.**

The principal makes clear her mission to provide instruction for every student, as well as care and therapy, regardless of the complexity of his or her conditions or disability. She reviews systems and the school's organization to ensure that students have the most effective instruction and that resources are used to optimum effect. The administration reviewed the assessment program and, as a result, changed the content of professional development to improve how assessments are carried out. The school monitors and reviews the delivery of instruction routinely and makes changes quickly when assessment data shows that modifications are needed.

The current school goals in the principal's performance review are reviewed through the year to ensure that actions to achieve them are making effective changes. These goals are not reflected in defined plans for teachers, who are not always clear about specific actions they need to take and how and when to monitor progress towards these goals.

The system for setting student goals is clearly defined in the individual educational plan structure, with three formal reviews each year when staff review progress towards the overall goals for the year. The goals for each student provide increased levels of challenge each year and are broken down into smaller steps that are monitored at the review intervals.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Ramon E. Betances School</b>	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>			X		

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

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?			X		
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?			X		
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?			X		
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?			X		
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?		X			
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?			X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			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 students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?			X		
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?			X		
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?			X		
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?			X		
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			X		

### Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?				X	
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?			X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				X	

<b>Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?			X		
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?			X		
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?			X		
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?			X		
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			<b>X</b>		

<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>					
<b>To what extent do . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?		X			
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?			X		
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?				X	
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?			X		
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?			X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			<b>X</b>		

◇	<b>Outstanding</b>
+	<b>Well Developed</b>
✓	<b>Proficient</b>
➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>