



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Alexine A Fenty School**

**Public School 139**

**330 Rugby Road  
Brooklyn  
NY 11226**

**Principal: Mary McDonald**

**Dates of review: May 9 - 14, 2007**

**Reviewer: Peter Williman**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Alexine A Fenty School is a large elementary empowerment school in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn. It serves 1097 students in grades pre-kindergarten through 5. The student population comprises 44% Black students, 30% Hispanic students, 17% Asian and other ethnic groups and 9% White students. The school is culturally diverse, drawing students from origins in some twelve countries and localities in the world. Special education students represent almost 9% of the total school population while 24% of students are English language learners. The school receives Title 1 funding for 78% of students. This figure is just above that of similar schools and above the average for City schools. Attendance statistics for 2005 indicate that the school average attendance of 94.1% was well above similar schools and City schools.

Empowerment schools have more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their school community. Empowerment schools are free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with and benefit from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal is a highly motivated leader who uses her high expectations and commitment towards the students to drive school development.
- The school collects a very comprehensive range of relevant data and uses it very effectively to understand the progress of students, including the progress of English language learners and special education students.
- Student records are very detailed, well maintained and updated in an accessible format at school, class and department level.
- Members of the administration, the cabinet and intervention teams are very knowledgeable in the use of data.
- Students enjoy school and are very effectively engaged in their lessons.
- The school revises curriculum flexibly through the careful selection of new programs and strategies which promotes achievement of its instructional goals.
- The blend of new and experienced teachers within the staff underpins the collegiality in planning and instruction.
- Formal and informal professional development activities complement each other well to meet the needs of individual teachers and the school's goals.
- Parent and community involvement with the school is strong.

### What the school needs to improve

- Use the school's very good database to identify achievable, objectively measurable goals for students, classes and grades to raise achievement.
- Quantify, more thoroughly, the degree of progress over time of students and groups of students.
- Specify the goals, timeframes, assessment and monitoring schedule within the Comprehensive Education Plan with greater clarity.
- Develop differentiation skills of all teachers in the school.
- Use data more thoroughly to modify interim and final goals.
- Formalize and structure the organization of the school review process to enable each administrator and leader to focus on achievement goals.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

**This is a proficient school with well-developed features.**

The Alexine A Fenty School meets its aim to be a school “Where great things happen”. Through the clear vision of the principal, determined to provide enriched and equal opportunities for students and staff alike, parents, administration and faculty work collegially to fashion a school vibrant in activity and eager to raise achievement. As a result, the school is open seven days a week and offers cohesive services for the full academic range of its students. This is within a context of maintaining the arts and sports curriculum and wide recreational opportunities. The school has developed a high competency in managing its student data and applies these skills very well across the range of its services. Consequently, the school has a very good understanding of student progress. While this knowledge is used very well in short-term planning for instruction the school does not yet integrate the data into the longer term to plan and monitor challenging targets in order to focus on raising student achievement. The school reaches out to parents and the community to draw in partnerships and support for its activities. The high quality of the administration, leadership and faculty gives the school very clear capacity to drive this multifaceted school forward, while maintaining a sharp commitment to student progress.

### 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 well developed.**

The school collects a very comprehensive range of relevant data and as a result has a very clear view of student achievement. In addition to academic data, the school analyzes data on behavior and attendance. It surveys students, parent and staff and uses this effectively to further understand its constituencies. Student data is very efficiently collated using a color-coded spreadsheet to give a highly detailed and structured view of individual students. It provides an overview of classes and, as a result, good opportunities to compare students’ progress within and across classes and grades. The student overview includes State and school assessments, ongoing reading records, special education students’ progress and interventions. These records are consistently maintained and valued by every teacher in addition to observational and conference records.

The system is very well applied to tracking special education students, students requiring intervention and English language learners. This is very significant in a school that has nearly 25% of students in this category. Consequently, the progress of the latter group is well documented and analyzed. The school maintains an appropriate focus on higher achieving students through its ‘Eagle’ classes. The school has, exceptionally, also used a consultant to set up assessment and close monitoring of the specific population of special education students because of poor motor skills, ocular motor skills or delayed sensory motor integration. This is an expanding piece of work which demonstrates a sophisticated overview of students’ needs and is leading to accelerated progress.

The school has introduced refinements in its analysis of student progress and as a result has greater capacity to measure and compare that progress more accurately. As yet, the school has not taken the further step to measure student progress over time from the point of entry, individually, in groups, in grades or as a school, to judge the impact of its instruction. In addition to the appropriate awareness of the relative progress of ethnic groups and gender factors in student achievement, plans are currently in hand to refine the capacity of the record system to enable the data of any specified group to be identified for fuller analysis and comparison. The principal, administrators and subject leaders are very aware of the patterns of school and subject performance and are very alert to what is happening in other schools. Consequently, they track the data of other schools and subsequently visit where this will inform decision making.

**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 proficient.**

Teachers, work individually and in their class, grade, subject or mini-school teams, supported appropriately by coaches and administrators. They plan instruction well from the formal and informal data available. Planning is matched to programs and curriculum calendars and within assessment time frames. Item analysis is very well used to inform next steps in learning. As a result, lessons are generally well prepared within the teaching models adopted by the school. Students make progress in their learning in a structured way. Subject coaches have clear strategic plans, which respond to analysis of data. The very good data that the school collects are very effectively used to plan for special education students, students requiring intervention and English language learners. As a result these students make better progress.

Long-term whole school planning is appropriate, yet it is insufficiently focused on realistic but challenging, objectively measurable goals based upon student performance data. As a result, plans are inadequately detailed to make good quality judgments of their progress based on clear, moderated or quantifiable success criteria. The school cannot truly align its planned progress with assessment results. The school is a very active and vibrant community with many projects planned to support student opportunity. Consequently, the administration and leadership do not always focus their attention sufficiently on raising achievement in a consistent and structured way.

The principal, leadership and faculty consistently convey high expectations to students at many levels and share those expectations with parents through regular formal and informal contacts. Teachers generally annotate students’ work effectively and share expectations through their conferencing. Rewards and celebrations are well used to support students. The many opportunities for after school competitive and participant activity encourage students to aspire. Some parents would like more detailed consultation on student progress although they know teachers keep in touch well on a day-to-day basis if there are issues to address. The high level of involvement of parents, the collegial culture the principal has inculcated and the enthusiasm of students portrays this as a well-focused school constantly striving to offer the best opportunities to its students.

**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 well developed.**

The academic curriculum is comprised of a good range of programs, which meet the mandatory requirements and equally offer opportunity to maintain a clear overview of progress. Well-itemized curriculum calendars keep the curriculum on target but enable appropriate flexibility. The mathematics program has integrated assessment but is very effectively used by the coordinator to generate school-based assessments as well. The reading program is benchmarked to enable progress to be tracked and is supported by very well-matched and organized resources. Studio in a School and Music in the Brain enrich the curriculum. The school cross-references the curricula, for example, in English language arts, mathematics and science to make it more meaningful and this also provides more sources of information on progress.

The school's student data record system holds teachers to account for the outcomes of their work very effectively. It also provides a very good resource to enable appropriate and flexible grouping of students for instruction. Because the principal has encouraged a culture that fosters initiative, teachers work hard to share and to improve their practice. The impact of this is seen in the good use that many teachers make of the workshop model of instruction to differentiate the curriculum for their students.

The school makes very good use of its budget and resources. The reading program functions very well because it is consistently resourced in each classroom to enable good presentation and accessible management of books. The hiring of a coordinator of student affairs in part facilitates the school's very wide range of activities. This enables better use of administration time. The clever introduction of an eight period day and a six day schedule rotation has very significant impact. Teachers have more opportunities to plan, students have access to a wider curriculum and leaders are able to input professional development.

Teachers use curriculum programs well. Students enjoy lessons and are very attentive and on task. They want to come to school because of the quality and range of activities they are offered. Relationships between adults and students are strong and of very high quality. Attendance is higher than the average for similar and City schools because the school has very effective measures to monitor and reward attendance.

**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 well developed.**

Despite the significant staff changes at leadership and faculty level, the principal has built a team which blends the strengths of experience and newly hired staff very well. Teachers consistently use and understand the available data. Those in key leadership positions manage data very effectively and use it well to understand and plan for school improvement.

The principal's policy to encourage initiative and risk taking enables formal and informal professional development to blend very well within this learning community. Professional development is differentiated effectively to individual and group need. The leadership sets the example through their own personal professional development and from gathering new ideas from courses and visitations. Mentoring of new teachers is of a high quality.

Coaches identify 'what isn't working' and take remedial action. External consultants are used very well to strengthen teaching and to be the critical friend to the school. Workshops, for example, on the Princeton Review help teachers to understand and use available data. The schedule very effectively allows teachers within and across grades to share ideas and review strategies.

The principal knows her staff very well both from data and personal observation. Teachers in combined team teaching classes use the situation well to share their practice and all teachers have the opportunity to observe colleagues. Grade teams, coaches, intervention teams and the administration interact very well. They share information, planning and review to promote improvement in instructional practice. The principal is well respected by the school community and has demonstrated a strong capacity to effect change.

School procedures are clear, well integrated into normal routines and followed by all students, staff and parents. A great strength of the school is the wide range of activities it provides for its students within the schedule, after school and during the weekends. With this strength comes a challenge to maintain a balance of administrative focus on the core mission to raise achievement. Many activities are lead by parents and funded by grants. For example, the parent coordinator has led a chess team to compete in a national competition. Students notionally play the stock markets and are sometimes seen with a Wall Street Journal. A wide range of partners provides good quality academic and recreational activity.

**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 proficient.**

The school has very good systems for evaluating students' progress throughout the year. Teachers use assessments effectively to review the progress of their work. However, at whole school level there is insufficient detail regarding the progress of plans. Assessments are not integrated effectively as a tool to monitor the progress over time or to specify realistic achievable targets. The leadership and intervention teams use comparison of student progress across classes and grades appropriately to monitor general progress of planned improvement of achievement. Plans are modified in response to assessment and review. This is demonstrated by the effective adjustments and further plans for the services to English language learners that have resulted from the close monitoring of students' progress and State test outcomes.

The culture of the school is one of seeking new opportunities and better services. Consequently, plans are kept under review and effective, and sometimes ingenious, adjustments are made to plans to engage students and increase opportunities, such as the revised program strategy for students at risk not meeting the standard

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: The Alexine A Fenty School (PS 139)</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.

<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	

<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	