



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Lenox School**

**Public School 235**

**525 Lenox Road  
Brooklyn  
NY 11203**

**Principal: Janice Knight**

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**Reviewer: Chip Morrison**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Public School 235, The Lenox School, is a pre-kindergarten through grade 8 school located in East Flatbush, Brooklyn. The school currently serves more than 1400 students, of whom approximately 95% are Black, 3% Hispanic, 1% Asian, and 1% White. About 4% are identified as special education students and less than 2% as English language learners. The school does not receive Title I funding. Average daily attendance over the past three years has been consistent at 95%, above the average for similar schools (93%) and City schools (92%).

The Lenox School occupies four buildings on three separate campuses. It is an Empowerment School. 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, an especially capable instructional leader, gets the most from her staff by combining high expectations for performance with trust and support.
- The principal is a skillful resources manager, making the most of her budget, staff, and schedule to meet the academic and social needs of students.
- Instructional leaders are highly effective at providing opportunities for professional learning that are differentiated to the needs and strengths of individual teachers.
- With guidance from the leadership team, teachers are highly collaborative, reflective, and committed to the school's vision for academic excellence.
- Instructional leaders and teachers have together created and continue to cultivate a family-like, child-friendly school culture that is both demanding and nurturing.
- The school makes effective use of student performance data to guide instruction and professional learning, and to measure progress against demanding goals.
- Instructional quality is consistently high from one classroom to the next so that students have equal opportunities to learn, no matter who their teacher is.
- The school works relentlessly to help at-risk students overcome difficulties, while giving high-performing students numerous opportunities for additional challenge.

### What the school needs to improve

- Aggregate the gain targets for individual students now in place to form interim goals for progress at school and classroom level.
- Extend the inquiry-oriented approach to data analysis, gathering data to explore specific issues and answer particular questions.
- Develop a school-wide system for scoring the quality of student work and use the data as an additional measure of student learning.
- Identify features that distinguish excellent instruction, then regularly measure the prevalence of these features on a schoolwide basis.
- Extend the use of lesson study, so as to provide opportunities for teachers to design, observe, and critique lessons together, with guidance from a coach.
- Continue to explore cross-curricular connections such as between science and mathematics.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

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

The principal has developed a mature and effective learning organization. With the assistance of an especially capable leadership team, she has fostered a school culture that combines high expectations for students and teachers with high levels of trust and support. As a result, instructional leaders are able to get the most out of teachers, while teachers get the most from each other, and from their students.

Other success factors include a strong focus on differentiated professional development and an emphasis on hands-on learning that leads to high levels of student engagement and interest. Efforts to help struggling students are relentless and sophisticated use of student performance data is guiding instruction and professional learning.

### 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 proficient with well-developed features.**

The school makes especially good use of data from a variety of sources to understand the performance and progress of individual students, classrooms, and grade levels. To supplement State assessment data, the school conducts several of its own interim assessments including a variety of grade-appropriate reading assessments. However, there is not a school-wide system for scoring the quality of student work which can be used as an additional measure of student learning. The school makes especially good use of The Princeton Review to monitor the impact of instruction from one classroom to the next. Many teachers also go online to access reports that show the results for individual students broken down by sub-skill, and make use of this information to tailor instruction to specific needs.

The school has so far elected not to invest resources in further analysis of ethnic differences. The school has been especially interested in looking at data on special needs students, and these students have recently made substantial gains. The school monitors academic performance disaggregated by gender, but has not found significant gender differences in achievement. Teachers and instructional leaders look carefully at available data to track progress and gather their own data through a range of interim assessments. However, they are only beginning to collect data of their own to answer specific questions, such as the impact of conferencing on mathematics instruction.

The school uses a sophisticated, value-added approach to monitoring learning gains by cohort groups from one year to the next. This compares the progress that each group of students makes as it moves from one grade level to the next. Comparisons with the performance of peer schools are used to benchmark progress.

**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 well developed.**

The school sets consistently high targets for academic results, and has been effective in communicating these expectations to teachers, students, and families. The principal expects and ensures that teachers set their own challenging goals for individual student progress and share these goals with students and parents. As a result, goal-setting is highly collaborative, and, in turn, commitment to these goals is also high.

While teachers set and track progress toward interim goals for individual student learning gains, instructional leaders do not as yet set formal, aggregate targets for gains in different classrooms. This relative emphasis on teacher accountability for individual goals has been substantially effective. However, the leadership team has begun to consider the benefits of setting aggregate interim targets at classroom and grade level.

The school works especially hard to identify struggling students and give them the help they need to get back on track. Academic support services include push-in and pull-out services, individual and small-group tutoring, extended day, after-school, and a Saturday program. Some teachers also volunteer their time, such as their lunch periods, to work with students. Students receiving formal services are monitored carefully to evaluate the impact of these programs on their learning. There are sophisticated systems in place for identifying first-grade students at risk of reading failure, giving them additional help and monitoring their progress through the end of second grade.

The principal works one-on-one with parents to communicate expectations and enlist the support of parents as partners in each child’s education. There is also a special emphasis on helping students monitor, and take appropriate responsibility for, their own learning. This is accomplished through the widespread use of rubrics and reflection notebooks.

**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.**

Over the years, the school has invested heavily in core instructional programs. A successful “balanced” literacy program combines early-grade phonics instruction with widespread emphasis on writing across the curriculum and independent reading. Every classroom has a well-stocked library. Most lessons require a significant amount of student writing. Mathematics instruction features the widespread use of problem-solving, group work, and the use of manipulatives. Similarly, science instruction is inquiry based, organized around hands-on investigations. Results from mandated assessments and the school’s interim assessments are used to validate the effectiveness of curriculum coverage. For example, all grade 8 students sit for the Regents examination in Earth Science, a 10th-grade exam. Nevertheless, there remain opportunities to continue to develop further cross-curricular connections, such as between science and mathematics.

Teachers are held accountable by instructional leaders, and, more importantly, hold themselves accountable, for helping students meet challenging academic expectations.

They use the results of interim assessments to identify areas of need and differentiate instruction based on these needs. Most classrooms show evidence of differentiated instruction, depending on student needs and teachers' professional judgments and teaching styles. However, the school has not identified those features that distinguish excellent instruction and so is not regularly measuring the prevalence of these features on a school-wide basis.

The principal manages the school's budget, human resources, and schedule to maximum effect. The budget has been used to hire additional teachers at certain grade levels to reduce class size, and to hire staff developers in areas of identified need, such as science. The principal has also been adept at moving teachers around to get the best fit between their skills and interests and the needs of students. The schedule has been skillfully developed to maximize opportunities for teacher collaboration, provide for academic support services for struggling students, and support the workshop model of instruction. The school-wide emphasis on the workshop model, hands-on learning, and student projects contributes to a high level of student engagement. Students at all grade levels consistently pay attention in class, and work well together in small groups.

A family-like school culture ensures that teachers and administrators know all students well and are quick to identify those with particular needs. This is accomplished through the division of the school into four separate learning communities, and from the fact that many students stay at the school from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. Students are clearly fond of the principal, their teachers, and of each other. The family-like culture supports the high rates of attendance. Extended absences trigger immediate attention.

**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.**

The principal has assembled a team of skillful, committed teachers who work especially well together. She uses a variety of networks to identify likely candidates and involves them in a rigorous process that includes a demonstration lesson. Teachers are hired for their commitment to reflective practice and their ability to use data to drive instruction. For example, a mathematics teacher was hired recently who had a background in industry as a data analyst.

Professional development opportunities are differentiated to the needs and interests of individuals. There is a good combination of external workshops with internal professional learning opportunities, such as intervisitations and collaborative lesson study. The principal also encourages teachers to share their expertise with each other, and builds opportunities for collaboration into the schedule. However, opportunities for teachers to design, observe, and critique lessons together, with guidance from a coach are less common. The principal is especially keen on supporting teacher study groups. For example, the three middle-school mathematics teachers have three free periods together each week, for collaborative planning and their study group.

The principal and assistant principals spend much of their time in classrooms. Teachers respond well to this, and express the feeling that they are not being supervised so much as coached. Teachers also visit each other's classrooms on a regular basis. This supports the consistency of instructional quality from one classroom to the next. There is a strong emphasis on collaborative team planning. Teachers in the lower grades meet as a grade

level weekly, while teachers in the upper grades meet by department at least once per week, and sometimes more frequently. The principal and her leadership team provide an overall framework and set overall goals, but teachers are expected to work together within this framework to plan instruction and monitor progress. Consequently, teachers express a sense of empowerment and group accountability.

The principal is highly respected by students, teachers, and parents alike. Her management style is demanding and business-like, but also trusting and supportive. She has been especially effective in forging a sense of community and shared purpose across four learning communities on three different campuses, all of which run smoothly. Transitions between classes are orderly, and children are well-behaved.

The school works well with outside organizations to support and enrich learning opportunities. There is a special emphasis on student involvement in community service. As one of many examples of this, one of the teachers runs a “student round table” group during the lunch period, at which selected representatives from different classes work with him on a range of philanthropic community service projects. Even though this is a non-academic setting, there is still an emphasis on writing and accountable talk.

**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.**

A culture of continuous improvement permeates the school. In spite of the school’s solid track record of success, there is an ongoing effort to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment. This is based on careful monitoring of measurable results both formally, as part of the Comprehensive Education Plan process, and informally, on a daily basis. However, leaders do not yet set measurable interim performance targets as a common practice, and this limits their ability to manage performance at the classroom level.

Instructional leaders pay close attention to learning gains of individual students, especially those who have been identified as needing help. There is a clearly communicated expectation that teachers will help all students make continuous progress, regardless of their starting points, and this is monitored closely through the interim assessments and other means, though without specific targets. Instructional leaders do compare progress of students from one classroom to the next, and are quick to intervene when necessary.

The principal and her leadership team have demonstrated the ability to make changes where necessary, based on careful review of assessment data. As one example, the whole middle mathematics department was re-staffed recently in response to what leadership considered to be unacceptable test results. This is again reflective of how the school continues to meet and exceed high expectations for student performance through a strong focus on academic excellence and continuous improvement.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: The Lenox School (PS 235)</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	