



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Felisa Rincon De Gautier School

Public School 376

**194 Harman Street
Brooklyn
NY 11237**

Principal: Brenda Perez

Dates of review: May 23 – 25, 2007

Reviewer: Nan Billingham

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Felisa Rincon De Gautier School is a small neighborhood school servicing the community of Bushwick in Brooklyn. It has 536 students enrolled from kindergarten through to grade 5, of which 89% are Hispanic, 9% are Black, 1% are White, and 1% are Asian and others. It has 157 English language learner students accounting for almost 30% of its student population, where Spanish is the dominant language. There are 54 (10%) special education students.

In 2005 the school was selected to host the first Talented and Gifted program (TAG) in the district and is now in year 2 of this program. Each year a new 1st grade class is added.

Attendance is improving and to date is 93%, which compares favorably with similar and City schools. The school received Title 1 funding for 93% for its students in 2005-2006. This is higher than similar schools and significantly higher than City schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and her administrators are effective leaders and have the capacity to move the school forward.
- The work with community based organisations, and other institutions, is outstanding and the many grants received support the needs of the school and its community well.
- The work with parents through curriculum and other workshops, including increasing cultural awareness and the development of the highly successful fathers' program.
- Data is used effectively by all to track students' performance horizontally and vertically, especially in the areas of English language arts and mathematics.
- Professional development is a high priority and is differentiated for all teachers.
- The range of enrichment and project based programs available to all students.
- The whole school environment is exciting and stimulating and visibly celebrates student success across the school.
- The commitment of all the staff ensures a collaborative climate which supports the needs of all the students.
- Students enjoy coming to school, they are happy and feel safe and secure.
- The quality of delivery of instruction in all curriculum areas is good.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to develop the use of data to support student progress through analysis of different subgroups.
- Develop the use of assessment to gather data for the science and social studies curriculum to support and inform the other school data.
- Expand the arts program to ensure all students have more exposure to music.
- Ensure differentiated instruction is aimed at all but in particular the potential level 4 students.
- Move students towards peer and self evaluation to make them more reflective and independent learners.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

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

This is a project wide school which was recognized as one of New York's most rapidly improving schools in annual yearly performance in April 2006. The school environment is energetic and lively and is well led and organized by the principal and her two assistants. Significant changes around the areas of assessment and the development of the extensive enrichment programs and working with community based organizations have all contributed to its growing success and development.

The school is in its fourth year of successfully implementing the Teachers College reading and writing project and has been selected to mentor another local school and also provide professional development training for three others schools in the earlier stages of the project. The school was selected as the first Talented and Gifted program schools in the district and the delivery model adopted is impacting on developing instructional activity in other classrooms throughout the school. Students can also aspire to join the groups already in place, a motivational factor for them. The enrichment activities available daily and after school to all students are instrumental in raising pupil self esteem and supporting their learning. The activities range from ballroom dancing, which the school competes successfully City-wide, to working with theater groups and the Guggenheim Museum. Parents, students and staff all recognize the principal's capacity to bring about change and aware of the opportunities afforded to them by her persistence and tenacity in pursuing resources and grants for the school. The parent association is a strength in helping parents to support their children well. Parents praise highly the efforts and hard work of teachers and other staff in helping and supporting their children in their learning. The school is keen to move forward in developing its capacity to analyze and use data to drive instruction and raise student achievement; it is already made good progress in this area. Systems for monitoring and evaluating goals and plans are established.

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.

The school uses all available data to analyze its performance and to track the progress of its students. The range of data it collects includes diagnostic, formative and summative assessments. Student data is used at the beginning of each academic year to group students. Literacy and mathematics assessments are used regularly to differentiate instruction across the grades. The school uses its own data to analyze trends and track progress of individual students and the classes in each of the grades. The school has developed its own reading level rubric which correlates to State test levels from grades 1 to 5. This is displayed prominently in all classroom areas and parents and students understand this. In mathematics students in need of extra support have their own individual portfolios for tracking their progress. In literacy the school has identified from its data that for all their students', but especially the English language learner students, reading levels need to increase to ensure they can access the State and City-wide tests. As a result the percentage of students achieving level 1 is decreasing

Data is collected monthly by the assistant principals and coaches and this provides localized support for classes, teachers and individual students. In mathematics teachers successfully use the end of unit test to identify areas of underperformance, creating their own tests to assess progress of areas of identified weaknesses to evaluate effectiveness. Most of the school's focus is currently on students with special educational needs and the English language learner students. The school has recently identified the increased number of Mexican students joining the school and is monitoring this closely. However the principal and her team are planning to disaggregate more targeted subgroups further as they develop their assessment system more widely. Comparisons are made year on year and they also measure their progress against district and other similar schools. As a result inter- and intra-visitations are common practice. The school is also a partner school and works to support other schools as part of the Teachers' College program.

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 Comprehensive Education Plan is a 'living document' and its main goal is to increase all students' grade levels by one therefore decreasing the number of students achieving level 1 and increase the percentage achieving level 4. School and State data support the strategies in place and the effective use of data to drive instruction is having an impact. All available data is reviewed through faculty conferences and grade level meetings. Teachers work collaboratively to plan for student needs and are well supported by administration, the literacy and mathematics coaches and the Teacher College Consultants. Teachers set individual goals with students through the twice-yearly parent conferences ensuring that students, and their parents, know what to do to improve.

The principal reviews growth for classes across grades, specific groups and individuals and the instruction team analyses data, makes recommendations, prepares action plans and aligns planning to support the needs identified. For example strategies are in place for a small group of students at risk in grade 2 and they are at present piloting the assessment-led reading program 'Headsprout'. The main focus in grade 4 is the provision of a science club and in grade 5 the literacy coach is working with social studies to ensure consistency across instruction. In the kindergarten the school is piloting the use of a software program for listening and speaking to support English language learner students. Students identified as at risk have portfolios which are reviewed and monitored by the academic intervention team and a variety of intervention services and strategies are successfully implemented. The pupil personnel committee makes decisions based on parent and teacher input and makes referral where needed to special programs. Parent attendance at academic workshops is high and they value the extensive communications about their children's progress. All letters and the newsletter are translated into 'home' languages to allow parent to access the information to ensure they can support their children's learning. Parents conveyed that because of the high expectations of the school and its staff their children can access better schools in the next phase of their education. To date the data used successfully to inform improving practice and accelerate student progress is collated from mainly mathematics and English language arts data; the school acknowledges it needs to develop more fully its systems to include all science and social studies assessments in the future.

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 school delivers the mandated curriculum and also promotes a range of enrichment activities and clubs after school. It also focuses on enrichment activities including dance. Each week all classes have gym and arts in addition to science and social studies in the upper grades. The Talented and Gifted classes have a compressed curriculum from Monday to Thursday and Friday is allocated to project and enrichment day. The students and parents are supportive and appreciative of this scheduling. The extensive enrichment program for all students offers superb opportunities for students to excel in other areas too. However access to practical music experiences is limited and needs to be developed. Teachers are accountable for analyzing data to identify trends and this is supported and followed through by the coaches. Strategies and support are put in place and best practice is shared across subject areas and grades. Being a small school does impact on scheduling decisions and the hiring of teachers. The principal has long term strategy for the Talented and Gifted program and the cluster development in particular science and drama and she is keen to continue hire high quality teachers to support this.

Classroom instruction is lively, focused and students are actively engaged. English language learner kindergarten students use laptops to access a speaking and listening software program. They use this confidently and competently and the results are being monitored by their teacher. Statistical evidence supports that students are progressing at a quicker rate and developing keyboard skills at an earlier age. Older students articulate their own levels in reading and mathematics, know how they are doing and what they need to do to improve. In classes there is evidence of differentiated support but for those of higher achievement levels this is not as consistent; this is an area for development. Students enjoy school and feel safe, are proud of their achievements and the displays in and around the school environment echo this. Parents commented on the ‘pride staff takes in the school’ and how this translates into the care and nurture they provide for the students. Attendance is a priority for the principal, her staff and parents. Procedures are in place to ensure students’ attendance increases; figures to date indicate a modest increase on last year’s figures and they exceed similar and City schools.

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 school’s professional development plan is differentiated to effectively meet the needs of all teachers. Professional development is a major strength of the school and, apart from the professional development days and the Teachers College calendar days, there is a lunch and learn club plus voluntary well attended after school training sessions. The teachers also particularly value the ‘inter’ and ‘intra’ visitations opportunities offered to them. An annual needs survey is carried out and teachers can choose from a menu of training courses.

The school supports and encourages teachers in attending regional and national training events and then the participants turnkey during common preps, conferences and training days. The principal views professional development as key to driving up standards and she has invested a lot of time and resource in helping teachers learn how to use data to monitor progress. This has resulted in all teachers being much more accountable and accurate in assessing the progress of all their students. Administration, the instruction

team and the cabinet are all involved in discussing reviewing and prioritizing professional development decisions based on student need and areas for development for each grade. Observations are an integral part of school life. There are formal, informal and 'walk throughs' and teachers welcome these and the constructive feedback and where necessary the support that follows. Teachers also commented on the benefits of intervisitation and the range of professional development opportunities offered to them. Common preps, summer planning groups, opportunities for self reflection and collaboration by the teachers and the different planning groups are instrumental in ensuring professional development training is well matched to building and aligning capacity. Professional development training is monitored closely through administrators, coaches and consultants classroom observations and the impact on student progress data. The principal has identified that to move student progress forward more, the school needs greater focus on training teachers further in order to empower students to be more reflective and independent learners. The use of peer and self assessment will be integral to this strategy.

Parental involvement is excellent and the workshops are wide ranging. They include academic workshops and workshops provided by the local hospital and other community groups to provide support for issues which impact on the students and their families. The fathers' workshop was a resounding success. The principal and her administrators are widely respected by staff, parent and students alike. There are systems and schedules in place that ensures students feel safe and secure.

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.

This area of the school's work is developing and evolving. The Comprehensive Education Plan is reviewed throughout the academic year and monitored by different committees. Staff members have ownership of this document and its outcomes. The parent coordinator has, for example, successfully introduced and run a workshop for fathers. This has been hugely successful and as a result a self-directed fathers' group has emerged.

The principal and cabinet systematically review and revise the data collected to inform and evaluate progress towards their goals. Monthly cabinet meetings are used to evaluate progress and plan modifications to instruction, planning and the professional development needs. The principal and administrators also value the professional dialogue with their local instructional superintendent to evaluate the school's progress. The principal uses her own performance review meetings as an opportunity to monitor the effectiveness of the school's instructional programs. All data, but in particular the school's summative data, is used to create measurable, strategic action plans. School and State data and formative data from the enrichment programs are used to develop plans for groups of student population identified at risk. All staff have input into these plans. Classroom grade levels are checked annually identifying trends and areas for development. This allows the school, to set its goals and challenges for the next academic year. Reviews are carried out three times a year by the assistant principals and coaches and modifications are made; teachers are responsive and adaptable to this.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Felisa Rincon De Gautier School (PS 376)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score		X	

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.	∅	✓	+
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"> each student, classroom, grade level, 			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"> ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 		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"> all other categories of interest to the school* 		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
Overall score for Quality Statement 1		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.

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.	∅	✓	+
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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X

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.	∅	✓	+
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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X
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.	∅	✓	+
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
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X
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.	∅	✓	+
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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X	