



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Leon M Goldstein High School for the Sciences

**High School 535
1830 Shore Boulevard
Brooklyn
NY 11235**

Principal: Joseph Zaza

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Reviewer: Denis Pittman

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Leon M Goldstein High School for Sciences is an empowerment school situated on the Kingsborough Community College campus in Brooklyn. There are 975 students enrolled in the school from grade 9 to 12. The ethnic composition of the school is 59% White students, 21% Black, 10% Hispanic and 10% Asian. There are relatively few students who are special education students (3%) and very few English language learners (18 students). Attendance rates are at 91% which is above State and City levels.

Empowerment schools have more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their school community. They 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 an effective leader providing a clear vision for the school and is well respected by students and staff.
- The standards achieved by students are high and are consistently improving.
- The relationship between students and staff is excellent and students greatly value the support and guidance given to them.
- The school promotes a strong sense of community amongst all its members.
- A culture of high expectations has been very successfully established at the school.
- There is a positive team ethos and a significant commitment by the staff to the goals and objectives of the school.
- The curriculum is challenging and effectively promotes the learning experience of students.
- The school has good partnerships with the community, education institutions and other support agencies to enhance its instructional programs.
- Parents are very supportive of the school and appreciative of the progress their children are making.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to develop teacher competencies in analyzing data and using periodic assessment to inform curriculum planning and instruction.
- Provide professional development to promote the continued implementation and application of differentiated instruction in classrooms.
- Achieve greater consistency in the application of procedures for monitoring and evaluation of the school's work by senior administration.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school with well-developed features.

Leon M Goldstein is a high achieving school which challenges its students to succeed. The principal and staff have effectively developed a culture of high expectations and achievement. These expectations are set within a community which is highly supportive of its members, including students and teachers. Relationships between students and adults in the school are very good. Students are highly motivated and keen to participate in all aspects of the school's working life. The curriculum is effectively geared to the high aspirational needs of the students. The school is successfully developing students who are articulate, have an opinion of their own but respect the views of others. Teachers are supportive and willing to give time and energy to meet the individual needs of students. Lessons are well prepared with an emphasis on providing a stimulating environment for students to learn. Parents value the support and guidance which is given to their children. They strongly endorse the openness and willingness to communicate which are positive features of the school's administration. The school has created an environment which is safe, stimulating and has the basis for even further success.

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 has a substantive range of standard tests and formal assessments which are compiled to provide data on the academic and personal development of all students. The New York City's Regents examinations are studied and analyzed to identify trends and potential areas for improvement. The school performs well in relation to these City and State standards. It has identified as an area for improvement which is to increase the proportion of students achieving at the highest levels. The school also generates substantive amounts of assessment data which is based upon its curriculum programs. The data collected in relation to research projects is an effective exemplar of this process.

A systematic review of item analyses of examinations enables the school to identify student competencies which need to be developed. The formative assessment of students compiled by teachers is proficient. The analysis of this data to identify trends in progress, over time, is an area for further development. The school has a broad awareness of trends in the data of groups of students related to ethnicity. Although this group is small, the analysis of English language learner needs is detailed and provides supplementary evidence for teachers to amend their programs of instruction where appropriate. The school's commitment to inclusivity is reflected in the way special education students have been absorbed into the school as part of the collaborative team teaching (CTT) program. The school has secure diagnostic information and data about the needs of this group of students. This information is used well to schedule the instructional needs of these children in self-contained programs. However other staff do not have relevant summaries of the students individual education plans to add to the data profile of individual students.

The school's analysis of its own data is robust and rigorous. This is evident in the systematic analysis of its past performance and its achievements in comparison with similar schools. The variability in trends of performance between different subjects is appropriately identified which become the focus for interventions and action plans. The introduction of the periodic assessment procedures has been used to provide data on a specified group of students. The school has focused upon improving the performance of level 1 students and is using the analysis of this data to identify skills for development. The school has been successful in raising the achievement level of this group.

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 identification of the school's goals is a collaborative activity. The goals which have been identified are challenging and continually referred to during meetings which reflect improvements to the curriculum and the quality of teaching. A particularly good development has been the regular meeting of the empowerment school initiative team. This group has been responsible for leading the development of periodic assessment within the school and initiating professional development on data analysis. On broader issues of monitoring student achievement, the school has an established committee which reviews student report card grades with the view of identifying intervention support strategies. To this end the school has effectively identified a cohort of students who are underachieving and operating at level 1 and 2 standards of performance. The school has created an after-school program which these students are mandated to attend. This program is in addition to the regular individual arrangements which staff make to help and support students with their homework. The impact of the program is shown in improved standards of the students in summative assessments at the end of marking periods.

The principal and staff have very high expectations which are clearly communicated to all. This message is conveyed through a variety of documentation such as the student planning handbook, weekly newsletters and induction information for freshman. The schools’ extensively used website is another very efficient medium for conveying the expectations of the school to students and parents. The effectiveness of these communication systems also reflect the culture of a school where there is a shared understanding of goals and objectives for raising standards and enhancing learning experiences of 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 curriculum is effectively aligned with state standards. It has been creatively developed around a modular framework to provide innovative and challenging programs for students. For example, the 9th grade science fair integrates aspects of the living environment curriculum with science research techniques. The quality of the projects produced is exceptionally high. In foreign languages students make their own movies in that language and give presentations. This innovative approach gives students a broader understanding

and a greater flexibility in the use of that language. These illustrations are symptomatic of the way the school is developing its use of formative assessment in a broader context rather than a sole reliance on test data. However, curriculum maps do have assessment criteria systematically built into them. In consequence the curriculum does generate a significant amount relevant data to monitor the progress of students. A specific feature is the detailed rubrics produced by departments.

Teachers are held accountable for improving instruction. A comprehensive range of observations by senior leaders addresses this accountability factor. The co-planning which takes place within professional meetings supports these improvement strategies. Planning meetings clearly reflect a commitment to providing a range of differentiated experiences according to the learning needs of students. This aspect is a continuing focus in the school's work. For example, the work in the collaborative team teaching program provides evidence of the successful implementation of differentiated instruction activities.

Budget decisions are driven by the needs of students. For example, the financial commitment to providing computers and smart boards emphasizes the importance of providing instruction which is stimulating and interesting for students. In addition, recovery programs, such as the 'after-school' program, have been established for those students who need to make up course credits. Additional staff have been hired to service the needs of these students. Scheduling decisions also reflect student requirements. For example, the blocking program enables the school to utilize the services of a college professor to teach their 'College Now' program. The opportunity to use such highly qualified expertise adds significance and relevance to the program for the students.

The collaboration between students and staff reflects the family community which exists within the school. Students enjoy their experience at the school. They are willing and keen learners who are able to talk enthusiastically about their experiences. They value the support, care and concern which are shown to them by all members of staff. The students find their lessons to be stimulating and challenging. They are strongly encouraged to be independent thinkers and learners. Attendance is given a high priority. The commitment of students to the school is shown in the significantly high 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.

The principal has a stringent criteria and a detailed rubric for the selection of staff. Prospective new staff are required to take a model lesson, identify curriculum issues of interest and discuss an initiative they have undertaken. There are clear messages of promoting high expectations of performance and providing a challenge for students. Regular subject meetings enable issues about the comparability of standards across classrooms to be discussed and analyzed. The autonomy given to these planning meetings helps build the capacity of its members to use data and make decisions to improve student performance. A professional development committee synthesizes the views of staff to provide an ongoing staff development program. For example, discussions around congruent learning, active participation and the classroom environment were appropriately set within the context of curriculum planning. The principal also takes an active role in the delivery of professional development activities. He shared his experience of how to use computer technology to make short movies as a way of promoting and

stimulating interest levels amongst students. There is evidence of this training being reflected in the work of teachers in Spanish and music.

The principal has a detailed and rigorous procedure for formal observation of lessons which is designed to improve instruction. An efficient protocol for the departmental observations has been constructed but this has yet to be used with a degree of consistency amongst senior leaders. The instances of inter-class visitations, which are usually conducted by departments, are shared with other members. The school is looking to broaden the range of visitations by staff to departments outside their own subject areas. The principal has the respect and support of the school community. Parents are very appreciative of his openness and willingness to communicate with them and create opportunities for their involvement in the school. They value greatly his and the staff's commitment to the continuing success of this effective school. School management procedures are efficient and effective and the school operates smoothly.

The school has effectively established positive, productive working relationships with a range of external partners including community-based organizations. The strongest of these links is with Kingsborough Community College. They are responsible for sharing their resources to facilitate the physical education program, art and music shows and promoting team teaching with college professors.

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 effectively evaluates its long-term and short-term goals in relation to students' needs and progress. Senior leaders have a regular schedule of meetings to identify ongoing issues connected with student progress. For example, the outcomes of reviews of student achievement and in particular the effectiveness of teachers become the focus of intervention strategies or support. Individual reviews with teachers are also a measure of the effectiveness of the school's work. The regular reporting cycles provide effective evidence of student progress and where interventions may need to be made to address issues. For example, the necessity to improve literacy and mathematics skills of low-achieving students prompted the implementation of the after-school program. The development of the CTT program students has required some adjustment to the teaching strategies of staff to accommodate a range of student achievement.

The use of data as a diagnostic tool to evaluate the progress of specific groups is being appropriately established through periodic assessment, but what is not so firmly embedded is the use of data in a diagnostic way to identify trends in progress of individual students. The school has shown its ability to be adaptable to students' needs through its challenging Advanced Placement program. Staff have a clear perception of the goals and core purposes which drive its work. The evidence of this is shown in the help staff give each other, the involvement with extended day activities and the extracurricular program. The staff have shown they have the capacity to build on their successes and promote the academic achievement of students even further.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Leon M Goldstein High School for the Sciences (HS 535)	∅	✓	+
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	