



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Leonardo da Vinci School

Intermediate School 061

**98-50 50 Avenue
Queens
NY 11368**

Principal: John O'Mahoney

Dates of review: April 25 - 27, 2007

**Reviewer: Thomas J Clark
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Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well
What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall evaluation
How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Leonardo da Vinci School is a large intermediate school with over 2,000 students enrolled in grades 6 through 8. The school was recently enlarged to accommodate the growing population of intermediate school-age children in this area of Queens. The school is organized into five academies, each with all three grades, with English language learners and special education students evenly dispersed. Each academy receives administrative support from an assistant principal, dean and guidance counselor. The academies all focus on the school's core curriculum.

Eighty percent of students enrolled are Hispanic, 10% are Asian/Pacific Islander, 8% are Black, and smaller proportions are White and American Indian. English language learners comprise 34% of the student body, with 16 different languages and various dialects spoken in the homes. This proportion is far higher than other City schools. Twelve percent of the students receive special education services. With 80% of the students Title 1 eligible, the school is average for similar schools and higher than City schools. With a high mobility rate (11.4%), many students are not enrolled in the school for three years. The attendance rate is 93%, slightly higher than that of similar schools.

The school has been designated an America's Choice National Model School, due to the fidelity with which it has implemented that school design program. In addition, the school currently has six teachers designated as demonstration teachers for the Quality Teaching for English Learners program, designed to foster growth in English language learners' literacy skills in the content areas. For each of the past two years, through a Computers for Youth grant, the school has provided the families of all sixth graders with a free home computer with education software and internet access. The school will house a 6th grade gifted and talented program in the 2007-2008 school year with a grade to be added each subsequent year.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school effectively uses data to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of individual students.
- Administrators and teachers closely monitor the progress of individual students and adjust instruction when necessary.
- Administrators provide detailed written and verbal feedback to teachers regarding what was seen during observations and walkthroughs, which teachers find useful in reflecting on their instruction.
- Professional development effectively builds the expertise members of staff need to implement the school's improvement plans.
- A great variety of curriculum materials and instructional strategies geared to individual student needs results in active engagement in learning by virtually all students.
- Curriculum materials developed by the school are well structured and provide excellent support for new and struggling teachers.
- The school aggressively pursues and obtains grants to support its professional development plans.
- Student progress is monitored continuously during the school year, enabling revisions in the school's improvement plans when necessary.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to develop teacher assessment notebooks in science and social studies.
- Include measurable goals and objectives, and specific timelines in all action plans to enable the school to more effectively monitor its progress toward their successful implementation.
- Establish curriculum integration through infusion of literacy strategies into all content areas to continue to meet the need for English language learners to increase their vocabulary.
- Develop a school-wide program that permits regular, formally scheduled common planning time.
- Increase parental involvement in all aspects of school life.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

Through summative data from State and City-wide assessments, supplemented by on-going collection of individual student data, the administration and teachers plan to deliver effective instructional strategies for all students. A wide variety of instructional supports are available to help teachers meet individual student needs. Teacher-led curriculum development and revision are ongoing and are supported well by an array of professional development opportunities. Administrative support for teachers is strong; teachers “only have to ask” to get classroom supplies and instructional materials to support their work. Frequent monitoring of instruction by administrators provides teachers with developmental feedback that they then incorporate into their lesson planning.

The review disagrees with the school's evaluation that it is proficient. The school has made great strides in the past two years in terms of increased student achievement and improved student behavior and is well-developed in nearly all aspects. Having suffered from a bad reputation prior to this revitalization, the school still struggles to attract higher scoring students. The addition of gifted and talented classes and Regents level courses, with many students earning high school credit, and the school's focus on quality instruction for every student are resulting in a steady increase in achievement scores. All are critical in the continuing efforts to change the broader community's perception of the school.

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 routinely gathers data to inform decision-making regarding the progress of students toward meeting the New York State learning standards. Data from the State and City exam results are disaggregated and provided to teachers. In addition, the school collects a variety of data from informal assessments. In English language arts, teachers maintain a teacher assessment notebook, which records individual student data and class profiles including the previous years' scores, Developmental Reading Assessment results, running record observations and conference notes of individual student's level of skills. Similar detailed data is maintained in the student support log for mathematics. The historian's assessment notebook for social studies and the science assessment notebook are now being developed but their use is not yet as well developed as they are in English language arts and mathematics. Staff use the released items from the State assessments and resources provided by the region to develop interim tests that mirror the State exams. The results are used effectively to track individual and class progress during the year.

Performance data for English language learner and special education student populations is reviewed frequently. The English proficiency level of English language learners is tracked, and decisions made regarding adequacy of progress and subsequent implications for instruction. For both English language learners and special education students, data is

used well to diagnose student need in order to differentiate instruction and assign students to several different levels of support. The school collects and analyzes additional data to identify students with specific special needs, English language learners with limited or no formal education in their native country and those who have not been able to pass the English proficiency exam after several years of instruction. The progress of students who are reading far below their grade level, but who have not been identified as needing special education services is tracked closely.

School administrators routinely review the large amount of data collected, comparing the progress of individual students by subject, class and grade in regard to their progress toward meeting the New York State learning standards. Summary school and grade data comparisons are made with those of similar schools across the City. This process results in frequent realignment of the schools curriculum and instructional 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 proficient.

The administrators, lead teachers, coaches and teachers work collaboratively to develop the school’s Comprehensive Education Plan. The plan identifies annual measurable goals for student achievement in State tests. Teacher-led sub-committees develop action plans based on needs assessment data and that identify specific instructional strategies to be implemented, materials to be developed and staff to be responsible. During 2005-2006 the focus was on developing and implementing better strategies for differentiating instruction. For 2006-2007 the plans identified ways to integrate the English language arts curriculum into the other subjects in order to bolster students’ literacy skills. Action plans do not contain measurable goals and objectives, and specific timelines to enable the school to more effectively monitor its progress toward their successful implementation.

The administration and teachers have high expectations for student progress. Teachers and administrators use data in the respective assessment notebooks to efficiently track the progress of individual students. Conference notes included in the binder are used to plan mini-lessons, small group strategy lessons, guided reading lessons and one-on-one conferring sessions. Goals are shared with students so they are clear about what they need to do to improve their work. Students not making adequate progress or having behavioral issues are referred for review during the weekly academic intervention team meeting. Profiles and relevant interventions are developed for every student serviced and progress is tracked and monitored regularly. Students who still show no progress are referred to the pupil personnel committee for possible special education placement.

Parents receive and give information about their children’s achievements and goals through regular reports and meetings with teachers. Representatives participate in the school’s planning activities as members of the standards-based leadership team. A parent coordinator has now been appointed to help the school in establishing more effective communication with the parents and community and involve them more fully in its work.

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’s curriculum committees analyze the content of State tests to re-align their pacing calendars to ensure that topics included on the State assessments would be covered before the testing. In addition, specific instructional strategies have been identified and incorporated into the planned curriculum based on student need. For example, the school identified the need for students to develop their vocabulary, especially English language learners. To address this need, programs were implemented to differentiate instruction using read alouds, mini-lessons and workshops utilizing vocabulary-building strategies. Work continues to ensure all teachers differentiate instruction all of the time. For example, to further align instruction with the standards, English as a second language and English language arts teachers co-taught with social studies teachers, which incorporated balanced literacy strategies into their classes.

Teachers are held accountable for meeting the needs of individual students through frequent observations and walkthroughs by administrators, and through the review of the teacher assessment notebooks. Teachers view this as good support which helps them better meet their students’ needs. The teacher assessment notebooks show that teachers know the needs of their individual students well and who plan differentiated instruction for all ability groups based on that knowledge.

Resources are allocated according to identified student needs. Collaborative team teaching and additional classes are rostered where student need dictates additional support and individual student attention is necessary. Literacy and mathematics blocks are scheduled for each day to provide ample time to base instruction on on-going student assessment. The administration effectively seeks and obtains additional funding to support the school’s many initiatives. Common planning time is provided but is not yet included in the school program.

The quality of instruction and focus on individual student need results in high levels of student engagement. Staff pay good attention to students’ personal development and students feel confident to speak with an adult about any concerns at any time. Student attendance is a high priority and rigorously monitored as is evident from the higher than average student attendance rate. A full-time family worker and guidance counselor are dedicated to the support of the school’s attendance program.

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 and assistant principals are well respected by the school community for the improvements they have brought to the school in the past two years. They are seen as responsive to the needs of students, parents and teachers. Systems in place ensure daily routines are followed consistently and that the school runs smoothly.

Faculty members are selected after interviews by the principal and assistant principals and selection is based on which teacher will best meet the school’s needs. Criteria for selection include high expectations for all students, content knowledge, an ability to use

data and a willingness to work collaboratively. Well-structured team meetings ensure regular evaluations and revisions of the school's work. Once a week, the standards-based instructional leadership team meets to monitor progress and identify areas of need. Collaborative study groups, chaired by teachers, identify improvement needs and plan ways to develop good practice for each content area. All outcomes are shared at department and academy meetings. Common planning time is provided but is not yet formally scheduled to ensure regular collaborative planning of learning.

Professional development is very well organized and focused on building teacher capacity to meet the needs of all of their students. Both in-house and external experiences support the implementation of the school's action plans focused this year on language acquisition. Follow-up is provided for teachers in the form of coaching in their classrooms. Teachers feel supported when they request specific professional development, "enabling us to become life-long learners". The school has provided the necessary professional development on an on-going basis to effectively implement the America's Choice program.

The principal and assistant principals frequently monitor classroom instruction. Written and oral feedback is provided in follow up meetings with individual teachers. The feedback is viewed as constructive by the teachers because it fosters self-reflection and identifies strengths as well as areas for improvement.

The school offers many additional activities to students through varied community partnerships. For example, the Sports and Arts Foundation offers after-school activities in art, ballet, basketball, chess, football, judo, soccer, tennis and track.

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 well developed.

The school's many committees and sub-committees, including the cabinet, the leadership team and the school-based instructional leadership team, frequently monitor the school's progress toward its goals. The standards-based leadership team meets monthly to analyze school data to evaluate progress towards meeting the Comprehensive Education Plan goals. The standards-based instructional team meets weekly to review school progress toward the respective content area goals in each of the action plans. Monitoring of progress toward the goals and objectives of the respective action plans do take account of student achievement when evaluating effectiveness but measures with clear timescales are not specific enough to give monitoring activities precise focus. This systematic monitoring and review ensures future long-term and interim goals build on the previous year's successes and identified areas of need.

The progress of individual students is always at heart of the school's data analysis efforts. Weekly meetings of the academic intervention team in each of the five academies demonstrate the school's commitment to ensuring that every student's needs are tackled effectively through regular re-alignment of programs and practices. Frequent conferences with individual teachers focus on individual student progress and documented in the teacher assessment notebook. Data is constantly reviewed and changes made in the school's plans when necessary. The school's culture of planning is evident throughout, resulting in excellent use of data for decision-making.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

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| SCHOOL NAME: Leonardo da Vinci (IS 061) | ∅ | ✓ | + |
| Quality Score | | | X |

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| 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.

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| 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 | |

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| 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 |