



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Francis Lewis School**

**Public School 79**

**147-27 15 Drive  
Queens  
NY 11357**

**Principal: Mr. Joel Schuckman**

**Dates of review: November 15 - 17, 2006**

**Reviewer: Margaret Lee**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The school has 1,008 students from pre-kindergarten through to grade 6. Special education students account for 14.3% of all students enrolled. The school has been especially recognized by the region for the teaching of special education students in collaborative classrooms. The largest ethnic group of students is White with 54%. A further 32% are Asian and 14% are Hispanic. Nearly 8% of students are English language learners. The school is not Title 1 eligible. The attendance level is above 96% which is higher than similar schools and the City average.

The school has been recognized this year as one of nine New York City Public Schools that has made significant progress in narrowing the achievement gap between higher-and lower-performing students.

The school demonstrates high levels of cooperation, care and concern for all students and the school community is proud and supportive of the school. There are several positive partnerships with external providers working for the benefit of all students. The school has a stable staff and the curriculum choices are rich and varied with many opportunities for students to be accelerated and challenged in their learning.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal is an outstanding educator and leader who has achieved significant improvements in teaching practices and student achievement.
- The instructional leaders demonstrate exceptional professionalism in their work with teachers and in their contributions to the learning culture of the school.
- The school embraces all students with a caring culture of student centered learning and data driven instruction.
- The school has significantly closed the achievement gap with improved levels of performance in English language arts and mathematics.
- The teachers are knowledgeable, highly skilled, energetic, dedicated and very supportive of each other, demonstrating a passionate commitment in their approach to teaching and learning
- The ongoing professional development program is based on the use of data and is prominently reflected in all teachers' work.
- The students are obedient and well-behaved in following the routines of the school and classroom.
- The school building is well maintained and attractively presented with many welcoming and well used bulletin boards.
- The teachers' classrooms are productively used as student learning spaces with bright stimulating displays celebrating student successes and a rich variety of resources.
- The parents respect the teachers and school leaders, working extensively for the school and giving generously of their time to support programs.

### What the school needs to improve

- Increase the use of self and peer evaluation of school practices and student outcomes through structured collaboration between teachers.
- Record the cycle of assessment to inform instruction and, where necessary, realign practices and resources to improve outcomes.
- Complete documentation of the grade level curriculum goals as they relate to standards ensuring implementation of the mandated curriculum.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a well-developed school.**

This is an exemplary school. The school bases all decisions on the quantitative data it collects. The school also uses qualitative information to inform decision making about school practices. There are high levels of professional commitment and collaborative learning inherent in school practices.

The collective examination of data and the findings are used to inform teaching across the school. The teachers regularly monitor their teaching in relation to student needs. The school has been recognized for the success of collaborative team teaching instruction. Additional intensive targeted support is provided to advance the under-achieving student in class and with additional instruction after school and on Saturday.

The school resources are prioritized to support the learning and the development of the whole child. There are many extra curricular experiences provided for the students. The school tone is established and maintained through changing monthly themes to build good character traits.

The continuous review and evaluation of student progress and school practices and programs is cyclic. The parents have a strong and supportive presence and teachers and students enjoy being at 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.**

In six years since his appointment the principal has been successful in transforming the school. All teaching and learning decisions in the school are based upon the needs of students, which are identified through a wide range of assessments and a detailed analysis of other data and student information, including information on the progress of significant groups of students by gender and ethnicity. Student data is routinely collected and thoroughly examined and monitored by the teachers. Teachers maintain student conferencing records and regularly refer to them in their preparation of teaching points.

Flexible groupings of students based on interpretation of data are evident in classrooms. Each classroom has a range of learning centers and teachers construct learning materials to meet individual student needs. The progress of all teachers in responding to their students' data information is carefully and vigilantly monitored by the administration through individual teacher meetings, faculty meetings and with their direct involvement through frequent classroom visits. The special education students are monitored weekly in similar ways to all other students. There are weekly meetings between all special education teachers to work collaboratively and to discuss and plan work for their students.

Teachers conduct observation surveys in kindergarten classes at the beginning of the year in the time before Early Childhood Learning Assessment System Teachers at other grade levels administer diagnostic tests, student conferences and keep running records. Teachers are using this information as a basis for self-reflection about their own teaching practices.

The impact of these practices has achieved significant closures in the achievement gap at grade 4 in English language arts from 2004 to 2005 with a 17% improvement. The improvement at grade 4 mathematics for the same period was 8% with 95% of students reaching the minimum performance targets in 2005. The collaboration between teachers is exceptionally productive and influential on improving student performance levels.

**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 formulation of school learning goals stem directly from classroom goals and are modified following regular monitoring of student progress. The school is well organized structurally and the collaborative approach at meetings works very positively in achieving constructive outcomes. Through sensible and exceptionally supportive approaches the principal has the instructional staff accepting change readily and ably. The school has achieved the goal to change the teaching and learning strategies in English language arts and mathematics. The Teachers College workshop model has been adopted, which has been successful when aligned with current policies and with staff enthusiastically contributing energy and ideas for further improvements.

The collaborative and representative meetings are open with free discussion informing solutions. One successful outcome has been the remarkable student development that is occurring in collaborative team teaching classes where half the students are students with special needs education and these students are indistinguishable in their behavior and their performance levels from the rest of the class. Students are doing well at the school and are enthusiastic about their work. Another impact of these meetings has been the examination of data trends in New York State tests along with evaluations of daily instructions to best meet student needs.

Parents are very involved and readily contribute to the creation of school practices and goals. Parents attend executive board meetings, parent teacher association and school leadership team meetings. They are generously provided with school resources to support and encourage their participation. Parents appreciate the ready access they have to all members of the school administration and the timeliness with which teachers let them know of any concerns. They are justifiably very proud of their school and understand that it is the high expectations of the teaching staff that are resulting in such effective learning.

**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 literacy and mathematics coaches play a valuable role in teacher development and in the continued improvements of the teaching and learning program so that the programs are fine tuned and differentiated in the light of student data. The two coaches are well respected and work in close collaboration with staff to ensure that their subject development makes a significant contribution to the school's drive to improve each student's performance level. The assistant principal works well supporting all developments and ensuring that all aspects of the curriculum are fully implemented.

Instructional practices and content are willingly and spontaneously changed and modified according to the data on students' learning to motivate students and accelerate progress. The teachers are highly motivated and well supported to perform to the very high expectations that the school principal articulates. The emphasis on teaching points and the allocation of time for activities are considered for the needs of each student at all levels. The principal is a driving force in the teaching and learning processes and contributes by giving model lessons, contributing in teacher meetings and generating professional discussions between teachers. The impact on the school environment from these practices is the creation of a learning organization continually challenging itself by learning from each other and adjusting practices and processes accordingly. Relationships between staff and students are excellent, and based on mutual respect. As a result behavior is exemplary and attendance is much higher than average because students enjoy coming to school.

The school welcomes special education students into the school. The thoughtful and proactive solution, based on researched evidence and base line student data, was to form collaborative classes where teachers team teach to classes where special education students are equally mixed with high achieving students and learn in part through interacting in peer tutoring wherever appropriate. This program has been recognized as a model approach for special education in the region. The impact on the school's success has been remarkable and the school is currently performing above the average of similar and City-wide schools.

The schools' budget is targeted well at classroom instruction and additional instructional support. It is also used effectively to provide a rich range of classroom resources and books. The well-resourced technology classroom provides access to computers for each student. The impact of these can be seen in the improvement in performance, particularly in mathematics where there is greater evidence of problem solving skills being used in classrooms. With support from an interested and enthusiastic staff, the school offers a wide variety of enrichment and extra-curricula activities to supplement the core curriculum.

**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 selects teachers with suitable skills and talents to meet the needs of students in each grade level. The instructional leaders and coaches display high competency levels and work sensitively and encouragingly with very high success rates in supporting teachers in adopting the new student centered teaching and learning practices. The principal is highly respected by her staff, many of whom are long-serving, and many student teachers wish to become full time staff members.

Professional development is planned on the basis of staff input and clearly identified whole-school needs. It is conducted by both the principal and other teachers. The principal and coaches model lessons and tailor these to teachers' requirements or present new materials and approaches. They also hold 'teacher talk' breakfasts where professional discussions occur between teachers. Differentiated professional development is also offered for individuals and at grade and faculty level. Each teacher's common preparation time is a professional learning occasion. Extensions to professional development learning this year has been the creation of classrooms as 'lab sites' and subject specific committees have been formed in literacy, grammar and mathematics. The school is a community of learners.

The principal and assistant principal regularly visit classrooms throughout the school. There are also frequent classroom inter-visitations to work with teachers in the classroom supporting special education students. The school administration knows at first hand the learning conditions of each classroom. They also review student work regularly. They are highly respected for their direct involvement and leadership with classroom practices.

Parents form partnerships with the school, supporting program implementation after training as 'learning leaders', supporting students on a one to one basis and in the testing of students. There are also productive links with outside organizations and agencies. The school day operates peacefully and smoothly. It is well organized and the transition from one program to another is responsibly managed by students.

**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.**

This is a school where reflection on data is an integral part of its culture. Staff and school leaders are committed to the evaluation of progress towards improving student performance. The Comprehensive Education Plan provides a sharp analysis and identifies areas for improvement. The teachers regularly and routinely review students' development and progress. The teachers understand the usefulness of objectively retrieved and up-to-date information when planning the next steps for individuals and groups of students. This practice is the foundation for the teachers' daily work with students. This information has a high priority and is referred to in weekly faculty meetings, the academic intervention service and pupil welfare meetings. There is, however, no record of the cycle of assessment to inform and realign instruction.

The school readily acknowledges that it is very effective in identifying how to accelerate the learning of its most needy students and the unchallenged student performing at level 3 only. Teachers are responsible for monitoring their students' progress. In response to identified needs modifications are made to both the curriculum content and pacing, and also the professional development calendar. There is documentation of the programs being followed but there is no documentation of the grade level curriculum goals as they relate to standards of the mandated curriculum.

The principal and assistant principal, the instructional leadership team and faculty members all review progress towards learning goals. It is the evaluation of their own practices and review of the schools own processes that remains relatively unexamined.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>Name of School : Francis Lewis School (PS 079)</b>	<b>Ø</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>
<b>Quality Score</b>			<b>X</b>

<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>	<b>Ø</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</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>			<b>X</b>
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>			<b>X</b>
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>			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>

\* 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>	<b>Ø</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</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.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>

<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