



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Forest Park School**

**Public School 97**

**85 Street  
Queens  
NY 11421**

**Principal: Maureen Ingram**

**Dates of review: May 22 - 23, 2007**

**Reviewer: George Wallace**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Forest Park School has 727 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school's roll has remained the same for several years. Eighty-six percent of students are Title 1 eligible, which is above the average for similar and City schools. The proportion of Title 1 funded students has been growing over recent years. The student population comprises 69% Hispanic, 5% White, 3% Black and 23% Asian students or those from other ethnic backgrounds. Students come from culturally diverse backgrounds and 37 languages are spoken at home. The proportion of students who are English language learners is 23%, and 6% are special education students. Twenty-two percent of the school's English language learners are recent arrivals to the USA. School attendance has been consistently high for several years and is currently running at 92.7%. This figure is almost the same as similar schools and very slightly above the average for all City schools. The principal and assistant principal have been in post for just under two years.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school collects a wide range of useful data which is increasingly being used to good effect.
- Students are actively involved in and enjoy their learning.
- Staff and parents have high expectations of student behavior and academic performance.
- The school is effective in its support for those students most in need of improvement.
- Students have adults in school who they trust and will turn to for help.
- The principal is well respected and has secured the total commitment of parents and students in realizing the school's mission.
- Teachers respect students and recognize that they are accountable for improving their teaching and students' performance.
- Professional development is well planned, relevant and valued by staff.
- The administration's formal observations and walkthroughs provide a consistent and useful form of feedback to improve teaching.
- The school runs smoothly with clear procedures that are adhered to consistently by students and staff.

### What the school needs to improve

- Improve the quality of goal setting, monitoring and evaluation by making goals measurable and identifying checkpoints when progress can be assessed against success criteria and modifications made to plans.
- Continue to monitor, evaluate and plan to improve teachers' skills in differentiating learning in their classrooms.
- Increase the current level of staff involvement in school improvement planning by ensuring their views are taken into account when setting priorities and involving them in evaluating progress.
- Continue to increase staff's knowledge and understanding of how to interrogate and use data effectively.
- Further develop opportunities for students' voices to be heard and increase responsibilities to aid their personal and social development.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a proficient school.**

The school collects a wide range of performance data. Teachers' assessment records are thorough. They know their students well and through their records ensure they provide additional help to students in greatest need. The performance of English language learners and special education students are monitored closely, their needs discussed regularly and interventions carefully planned.

Students and parents strongly support their school. It provides a good education, and students enjoy their classes and feel that they are taught in many different ways that makes learning engaging and interesting. The school runs smoothly and teachers and students respect each other. Students know they have adults they can turn to in the event of concerns. Teamwork is strong and teachers collaborate well. The principal is well respected and, together with her assistant principal and staff, has demonstrated the capacity to manage change and make further improvements. The use of data in different parts of the school is beginning to drive plans for improvement. It is evident that further training for staff in the interrogation of data is necessary. School improvement planning is not sufficiently precise and there is no faculty involvement in goal setting. Goals are too general and plans do not contain interim checkpoints to measure progress at regular intervals during the year.

Teachers are accountable for students' learning and they understand their responsibilities in ensuring students' personal, social and academic growth. High expectations of students are the norm. Student attendance is a high priority. Staffing and scheduling decisions are based on students' needs and, through careful use of the budget, the school implements a curriculum to support good quality learning. Professional development is valued, and peer support through lesson observations and teamwork is commonplace.

### **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 is good at gathering data and ensuring that it is constantly updated so that its use relates not only to the immediate situation, but also takes account of trends that are identified. Information is collected from a variety of tests and assessments. This information supports teachers' knowledge of each student and, in particular, their level of understanding of the topics being taught. Analysis of data also occurs at class level and through grade meetings where assessment data is frequently discussed.

The school closely monitors the performance of English language learners to ensure that they are making expected progress. The performance and progress of special education students is also monitored in relation to their individual education plans. Although students

have short-term goals, teachers do not assess progress towards them in order to amend the goal or to realign the curriculum and instruction.

The senior leaders and coaches frequently bring data to meetings to inform the discussion of some aspect of school development. On some occasions, the analysis of data is the focus of the meeting. The school is working to increase the ability of staff to consider what lies beneath the data in order to identify patterns and trends for different subgroups. The principal is knowledgeable about the differences in performances of students from different ethnic backgrounds, as well as being mindful of ensuring that all new information has to be looked at in terms of achievement by gender as well.

The senior team knows how their students' performance compares with that of other schools, both locally and citywide. Performance levels and scale scores are beginning to be used to make judgments about progress and whether the rate of improvement is great enough. This is happening by class and grade through the records kept by teachers as well as through the discussions between teachers, coaches and the principal. In addition, the senior leaders are monitoring performance on the basis of ethnicity and other groupings. Data use by the principal and coaches is leading to more informed decisions about teaching and specific support for students, but the process is relatively new.

**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 senior leadership group uses data to generate questions about performance. Data use is starting to identify specific needs. However, the process of data interrogation at all levels is at a relatively early stage. Teams collaborate to explore the outcomes of tests and assessments and to set goals. Agreements are made on how to make changes that benefit students' learning.

Goals and plans arising from the Comprehensive Education Plan focus on the school as a whole. Strategies identified in each plan focus on subjects, grades and classes. However, these plans are not used extensively as working documents and the lack of minutes for most team meetings works against any accurate evaluation of outcomes. An exception to this approach is the way in which senior staff, teachers and other adults discuss the needs of those students in greatest need. These students are very well catered for and there is a wide range of approaches and intervention strategies being used to aid their progress.

All staff have high expectations of students, and parents support their aims. They are delighted that teachers are prepared to 'go the extra' mile to help their children. Communication between staff and parents is widespread, valued and useful. Parents appreciate the activities and workshops staged by the school, and these events are well supported. While the school is committed to working effectively towards improving the quality of education and students' life at school, specific goals and plans are not in a written form that can be used to measure success. However, there is much in and around the school that shows that all members of the community are working hard to improve performance. Students do not have a voice in decision making, although the school recognizes that students are able to take on responsibilities that contribute to their personal and social development. The highly effective and valued peer mediation program

where nearly twenty students across grades 3, 4 and 5 have been trained in the skills of conflict resolution is an extremely good example of this.

**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 aligned to the mandated requirements and generates a wealth of performance data. In addition, there is an arts program and a valued extra-curricular program that is well supported by students who enjoy the varied activities provided. Teachers are accountable for improving their teaching and students’ learning. At times, they differentiate their instruction because they recognize the different needs of students. However, differentiation does not feature strongly in all classrooms. Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs of students and, therefore, resources, trips and professional development are all focused on the most important needs. Staffing and scheduling are guided by the curriculum requirements and the specific needs of the different populations of students in the school.

Staff know and respect their students who are good listeners and willing participants in class. Teaching engages students. They enjoy their lessons and respect their teachers in return. From a very early age, there is a strong emphasis on reading, writing and mathematics. In many situations, topics in science and history are used as the vehicle for instruction in improving students’ writing skills. Teachers are responsive to students’ personal, social and academic needs, and are prepared to find additional time to help them beyond the normal times of the school day. Students have good relationships with their teachers and other staff so that if they have a concern they feel able to talk with an adult. Good attendance is a high priority and systems are in place to help bring about improvements. It has been over 93% for several and this year with almost one hundred additional students on the school’s roll, good attendance has been maintained.

**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 hiring process is regarded as fair and thorough. In addition to academic considerations, being a team player is an important characteristic of prospective teachers as well as being flexible and recognizing the importance of professional development.

Professional development is well planned, relevant and valued by staff. Rightly, some professional development is focused on extending teachers’ understanding of data analysis and use. Teachers indicate that the program is extensive and takes many forms. In addition, the school arranges whole faculty training and programs beyond the school. Teachers use their common preparation times to develop their own understanding of specific subject issues and, frequently, outcomes from such meetings bring about peer development through lesson observations or further conversations.

The administration is actively and effectively involved in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. The formal observations are well documented and provide a consistent

approach to feedback outlining strengths and areas for development. Walkthroughs by the senior team, including coaches, also lead to constructive feedback or coaches modeling particular approaches to teaching.

It is through the grade meetings in particular that much interim planning occurs, although teachers do not relate this planning to whole school goals. Class and grade outcomes are used to evaluate plans and this leads to decisions about further strategies to secure improvements. However, further actions are not recorded and no specific plan is made about how the outcomes of such decisions will be evaluated.

The principal is well respected. She has the capacity to support her staff in interrogating the wealth of information available about students and their performance in order to effect further improvement. The school runs smoothly and all know the routines. All additional external support is managed well and aligned to support learning and raise academic achievement.

**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 Comprehensive Education Plan is extensive and contains a satisfactory level of evaluation to aid initial goal setting for school improvement. Some aspects of the plan are used to check progress against original goals, for example in relation to the achievement of English language learners. However, there are no formal points in the school year when interim assessments of progress are made. Any change in emphasis in school improvement is invariably a product of senior leader conversations and, occasionally, a whole school survey. Teachers keep good records of student achievement and the coaches are also building up useful performance data banks. This information, especially for English language arts and mathematics, is used at grade meetings to check on students' progress and plan their next steps. Discussion focuses on students' achievements as well as where and what strategies for improvement are necessary.

It is rare for teachers to refer to stated goals from the school's plan because it is not used as a working document. Teachers and coaches know their accountabilities and work towards raising student achievement. However, the direction for school improvement is not influenced by a plan for which they, the coaches, support staff or senior teachers have corporately devised and subsequently work to. Results from periodic assessments and other forms of data are used to monitor student performance. Interpretation of this data confirms either that the topics have been successfully taught or that modifications are required to improve student performance. Senior leaders understand the importance of evaluating teaching and the curriculum and using this information in the pursuit of school improvement. The existing goals are too general and, therefore, no accurate measurement of the school's outcomes occurs. However, subsequent planning is beginning to take account of the need for more specific goals that are measurable and achievable over different points in the school year in order to feed into successive plans and goal setting.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Forest Park School (PS 97)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		X	

<b>Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.</b>	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>			X
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students*</li> </ul>		X	
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>		X	
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>		X	

\* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

<b>Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.</b>	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.		X	
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.		X	
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.			X
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>		X	

<b>Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.</b>	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.			X
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X
<b>Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.			X
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X
<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.	X		
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.		X	
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.	X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>		X	