



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Laurelton School

Public School 156

**229 - 02 137th Avenue
Queens
NY 11413**

Principal: Renee Marin

Dates of review: December 5 - 6, 2006

Reviewer: Peter Williman

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Laurelton School is an elementary school which has transitioned to a kindergarten through grade 8 over the past two years, with a current pupil enrollment of 827 students. The student population includes 94.5% Black students, 4.4% Hispanic students, and 0.61% White, Asian and American Indian students. Special education students represent 12.8% of the total school population while 3.0% of students are English language learners. Attendance statistics for 2005 indicate that the school's average attendance at 92% is below that of similar and City-wide schools. The school is not Title 1 eligible.

The school has undergone significant changes. The principal arrived in 2006 after a period in which the assistant principal had temporarily been responsible for the school, following the previous principal leaving office. The school completed the transition to full kindergarten through grade 8 status in September 2006.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a very clear vision and a determination to unite the staff in high expectations for teaching and learning in order to improve student achievement.
- The principal has a clear understanding of the value of data as the instrument in setting goals and in translating objectives into effective activities for instruction.
- The assistant principal complements the principal very effectively in her work as an administrator and as part of a team leading the school strategy to use quantitative and qualitative data to best effect.
- The school is beginning to use a good range of both external and internal data and assessment to inform instruction.
- The administration has embraced the newly available interim data assessment to begin to monitor student progress more closely.
- The administration contributes high quality professional knowledge to stimulate grade level team meetings and to guide the progress of instruction.
- The school uses its resources well to support the development of English language arts.

What the school needs to improve

- Track and analyze the data of groups of students to monitor whole-school and interim goals, to inform instruction and to focus professional development.
- Develop teacher assessment and its effective use in differentiating instruction in class particularly in English language arts and mathematics, and monitor the impact of instruction upon student engagement.
- Develop further strategies to involve more parents and students in the work of the school through a review of best practices within and beyond the school.
- Develop strategies to raise the level of classroom engagement and the academic success of boys.
- Improve procedures for identifying priorities, targets and interim goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan and establish clear procedures for monitoring progress and evaluating the success of action plans.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is an undeveloped school, with some proficient features.

The Laurelton School has undergone significant changes in leadership, faculty, size, status and curriculum in the past eighteen months. It has been a challenge for staff and parents to realign themselves behind the school, which is effectively a new entity. The principal has high expectations and a clear vision of the instructional principles that should drive the school in order to implement plans for continued improvement in student achievement.

There are significant strengths in the leadership's and faculty's commitment in responding to the challenge to work collaboratively to ensure that best use is made of all available data. Consolidation of new methods of instruction and development of learning styles for students are the school's priorities. However, traditional approaches to teaching and use of data have, as yet, not been fully revised across all classes and grades to be consistent with new programs and this is a barrier to progress. The school realizes that it has an important role to play as a focal point for the local community and this aspect too has the potential to bring greater unanimity of purpose through increased parental engagement.

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 good range of assessment data and is beginning to use both external and internal sources of data and assessment, appropriately, to form an overall picture of student achievement. Data is gathered at whole-school, grade, class and individual student levels from City and State assessments, commercial assessments and assessment integral to curriculum programs, for example in mathematics. The school has recently adopted a commercial assessment scheme to give more detailed understanding of literacy skills for kindergarten through grade 3. Additionally, teachers maintain personal records of student progress but these are of an inconsistent quality in their content and organization. Some teachers demonstrate good knowledge of their class through regular use of their assessment binders. However, in a significant proportion of classes data is not recorded consistently and set against rubrics to identify student progress accurately.

The relative progress of special education students and English language learners is identified as a concern in the Comprehensive Education Plan and, as a result, the administration has increased the monitoring of the progress of these groups. They are well supported in this by the special education and intervention teachers. However, strategies are not, as yet, in place to address the significantly lower achievement of boys, which was also an expressed issue in the plan.

The principal has a clear understanding of the value of data. She is very new to her post but has already made an effective comparative analysis of the relevant groupings and

categories, resulting in a good understanding of the priorities to improve the use of data to inform instruction. She is working well with her assistant principal to this end.

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 undeveloped.

The schools’ planning processes at whole-school level and classroom level are not sufficiently articulated, consistent or coherent to make the best use of data to guide next steps in instruction and learning. This situation is partly the result of the transition the school is undergoing and partly because teachers are not fully conversant with data analysis to use it in the most effective ways to sharpen the focus of instruction and learning.

In the period leading to the appointment of the principal, the assistant principal did strong work to move the school’s Comprehensive Education Plan forward with support from the school leadership team. Some useful analysis resulted in clear goals and measurable success criteria. However, it is not a complete document and the decision has been sensibly made to build the subsequent plan on the additional data the school is currently accumulating rather than misdirect energies in the short term.

Special education and intervention teachers work collegially through the well-designed protocols to collate data to inform the best match of inputs for students.

The school is working hard to involve more parents and raise expectations of their children’s learning and this is beginning to be successful. Teachers make essential contacts and send test results home for parents to acknowledge. Parents value the parent teacher conferences but some feel they are too short. Workshops and family nights draw parents to the school. However, parents often do not understand how new programs benefit learning and this is a barrier to establishing a shared commitment. Students generally are not explicitly aware of their next steps in learning, although accountable talk in their lessons is raising their ability to articulate their understanding. Overall, while there are many good intentions, the administration recognizes that there is work to be done to ensure unanimity of purpose across all partners in the school to drive student achievement.

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 undeveloped.

The school’s programs meet the requirements of the mandated curriculum. The principal’s vision is to give coherence of purpose for learning by coordinating instructional activities and resources behind more child-centered approaches. This is implicit in the programs the school is implementing. Pacing calendars in English language arts and mathematics provide a sound basis for monitoring pace of delivery, but also for accommodating flexibility in response to the levels of student understanding.

Some teachers find the instructional methodology inherent in new programs for English language arts and mathematics very challenging. This is a barrier to consolidating the impact of those programs. As a result, both data and time are not used to best effect to differentiate instruction in order to meet individual and group needs in line with the principles of the programs. Teachers use classroom observations, assessment of students' work and conferencing with students to inform planning next steps. However, they are not always effective in using this information to form focus groups for instruction and specific learning targets are not often identified to differentiate instruction and record progress. Some teachers also experience difficulty in using technology to assist this process.

The principal knows the strengths of her staff well and identifies how those strengths can be utilized to move the school forward. Unfortunately a long-term absence has interrupted the opportunity for concerted work by the cabinet. The school is on a sharp learning curve with new programs, additional grades, and new teachers. However, the principal has created room in the schedule for shared planning and longer blocks of time for instruction and this is beginning to have an impact on the quality of instruction. She manages the budget carefully, with regard to the need to ensure that it is directed towards raising student achievement.

Students overall are very compliant in lessons and try hard. They like active lessons such as physical education, music and art. Work is not, however, always well matched to student performance in order for them to succeed. Some students and classes are not consistently engaged in their work and disruptive behavior results. Teachers generally are very caring and establish close relationships with students who know where they can go should they have a concern.

Attendance remains stubbornly below the levels of similar and City schools. Students and classes try very hard to meet the expectation of 100% attendance and to receive the associated rewards for this achievement. The school has an automated system for contacting parents immediately upon an absence but often a low percentage of parents respond.

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 proficient.

The school has appropriate planning and organizational strategies in place to support and guide staff at all levels in pursuit of the school's stated priorities. The principal sets high expectations for her staff and takes each opportunity through everyday contacts and leadership of meetings to articulate the principles that underpin school improvement. Recent teacher appointments demonstrate the principal's determination to promote high-quality instruction. These new teachers complement others who make good use of data and assessment. The principal has a clear strategy to use those strengths and leadership qualities she has identified among staff to raise school performance. Having an incomplete cabinet currently compromises the momentum of this work. The assistant principal is a valuable asset as a talented administrator.

Professional development is led by data analysis. For example, specific skill weaknesses identified in literacy in kindergarten through grade 2 have been addressed through a commercial program involving assessment and frequent consultancy. Interim data

suggests that students are making progress. 'Lunch and Learn' voluntary sessions, which bring teachers together to focus on specific points of instruction, also provide good support. The school makes good use of training provided by the region, which is turn-keyed to staff in common preparation periods. There is strength in the developing collaborative working of some teams of teachers in using good quality information to set clear targets for improvement. Some grade-level teams use these opportunities well but others are less receptive, and practice is therefore inconsistent.

Observations of lessons enable the principal to identify whole-school professional development issues, such as improving differentiation and group instruction. They also lead to appropriate individual support for teachers. Observations are well balanced in focus and frequency to meet staff needs. The observational record is formulated to match the workshop model lesson plan and therefore reinforces school priorities.

The principal's self-evaluation of the school demonstrates insight, clarity and purpose. She is establishing herself well as the leader to take the school forward. The school is well run and is becoming a centre for the community, especially through its partnerships with, for example, an arts group and the Young Leaders Institute which enhances learning and social skills for students after school.

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 undeveloped.

The school does not have explicit procedures to monitor the Comprehensive Education Plan through the school year. The school does not use the data it collects to track and evaluate student progress at a number of points through the school year and does not align its interim assessments with the goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan. In addition, although some data analysis has been used to identify the goals and objectives within the Comprehensive Education Plan, the measurable objectives appear arbitrary and not specifically related to the relative progress of students overall, classes or grades.

Objectives and plans for individual students are adjusted in response to data on a regular basis and some account is taken of the implications of assessments. However, the systematic review of the progress of whole-school objectives and objectives specific to grades is not yet embedded in school procedures.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

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| SCHOOL NAME: The Laurelton School (PS 156) | ∅ | ✓ | + |
| 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. | Ø | ✓ | + |
| 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. | Ø | ✓ | + |
| 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. | Ø | ✓ | + |
| 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 | | |