



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Francis Lewis High School**

**High School 430**

**52-20 Utopia Parkway  
Queens  
NY 11365**

**Principal: Jeffrey Scherr**

**Dates of review: November 1 - 3, 2006**

**Reviewer: Stephen Walker**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Francis Lewis High School is a large high school (grades 9 through 11) located in Fresh Meadows. The school has expanded to over 4,600 students who travel to the school from neighborhoods throughout Queens. The school population at Francis Lewis consists of a rich mixture of cultures with 46% Asian, 22% Hispanic, 17% White and 13% Black. There are over 40 nationalities represented and over 21 languages are spoken in the school. English language learners comprise 12% of the school population with the main language groups being Chinese, Spanish and Korean. Three-quarters of the general education students enter the school on or above grade level, and 9% are special education students. There are 226 teachers and more than 150 support staff.

The school has a Junior ROTC Program that is the largest in New York involving more than 450 students. The school's mission is 'a school of excellence for all students'. The school is housed in well-kept two-story buildings with a wide range of sports facilities including playing fields. The popularity of the school has led to serious overcrowding in the building.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal provides strong, reflective and dynamic school leadership and parents, staff and students greatly respect his focused vision for the school.
- There is a shared commitment among staff to the inclusion, achievement and personal development of all students.
- There is a positive culture in the school resulting in good behavior, high expectations and a sense of student commitment to the school.
- The school has developed robust systems to analyze performance data, which is well used to inform instruction so that most students demonstrate good progress during their time at the school.
- Teams of staff work collaboratively in order to accelerate the learning of each student.
- Curriculum programs are well developed with an impressive range of core classes and electives to meet the needs of the large number of students.
- Imaginative intervention programs support students who require additional help with their work.
- The school has a comprehensive and ongoing professional development program.
- The school continually evaluates its performance and seeks new ways to improve the learning and progress of the students.

### What the school needs to improve

- Address the disparities in the percentage of passing students among staff teaching the same course level.
- Further develop the setting of individual performance goals and share these with students and parents.
- Continue to develop the classroom assessment process so that it becomes an integral part of teaching and learning.
- Encourage further instructional differentiation in classes so that teachers address more specifically the individual learning needs of each student.
- Further develop the provision and use of technology as a tool for teaching and learning.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

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

Francis Lewis High School is a very successful school that supports students well in their academic and personal development. Although it is a large school, there is a real emphasis on the individual student and a commitment to support all students regardless of their learning needs. The school is very popular with parents and new students quickly engage with the positive culture within the school.

The school uses assessment data well and meticulously analyzes the information so that underperformance is challenged and remedied. The principal provides inspiring leadership and ensures that staff are involved in decision-making and work as a team.

This is a reflective school and all members of the community, including students, are encouraged to evaluate their work and to seek new ways of improving performance. The school is proactive when analyzing data and quickly modifies its curriculum and scheduling in order to accommodate students who require additional support. The principal is well aware of the areas that require improvement and relentlessly seeks opportunities to enhance the learning opportunities in the school. The school has good capacity to improve further and move towards its mission to be 'a school of excellence for all students'.

### 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 has developed robust systems to analyze performance data in order to improve the progress of students. The school makes full use of all the data that is available through the New York City Department of Education such as the accountability status reports, RCOS and NYSELAT. The principal and assistant principals meticulously scrutinize the scholarship reports in order to analyze the performance and progress of each student, class and grade. The principal is able to highlight underperforming classes and relentlessly addresses the differences in passing rates of students among staff teaching the same course level and students.

The school uses the assessment information to provide an objective understanding of the performance of groups within the school. For example, the school has highlighted the need to increase the four year graduation rate for English language learners, Hispanic and African-American students. It has also identified the underachievement of many boys and has made strenuous attempts to close the gender achievement gap. Special education students are well tracked through the instructional support service department, while higher-achieving students are monitored as they progress through full honors and advanced placement courses. The school report card is used to compare performance

and progress against similar schools. The school has recently undertaken a comparative analysis of the performance of English language learners in similar schools.

**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.**

Assistant principals work closely with teachers on a departmental basis to ensure that classes and individual students are well prepared for assessments. Results are analyzed and shared with colleagues in an open and collaborative manner. Teachers are accountable for their classes and regularly discuss the progress of their students. Departmental meetings are held on a regular basis. The implementation of the school-based strategies for raising student achievement is a common agenda item. Teachers analyze the results of their assessment and support the students in understanding how to improve their work. However, many teachers have not fully developed the classroom assessment process so that it becomes an integral part of teaching and learning.

Imaginative intervention programs support students who require additional help with their work. For example, additional compulsory periods in mathematics and science are arranged for students who are at risk of failing. A special summer bridge program in English language arts and mathematics focuses on raising the performance levels of incoming students to 9th grade standards. Struggling readers in both special education and general education classes receive instruction through the Wilson reading program. The school was concerned that mathematics results were only average, so all students are now receive three terms of Mathematics A instruction in order to improve performance in this subject.

Parents and caregivers are provided with regular report cards and are invited to parent meeting conferences twice a year. Parents praise the support from teachers and the emphasis on improving individual performance, though specific individual performance goals are not always shared with parents and students. There are good systems of care to support the academic achievement and personal development of students. Letters are sent home for students who are in danger of not being promoted to the next grade level. At the time of the review, guidance councilors were meeting with parents of students in grade 9 who had recently failed two or more subjects.

**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.**

Curriculum programs are well developed with an impressive range of core classes and electives to meet the needs of the large number of students. Courses are aligned to the abilities and interests of the students and groupings are arranged as a result of test scores. Alternative programs are quickly arranged when the assessment data indicates particularly high or low academic performance. For example, advanced courses in astronomy and forensic medicine have been arranged for high-achieving science students while environmental studies with a high emphasis on literacy has been arranged for students

with reading difficulties. The impressive extra-curricular and sports program is used to engage a large number of students including many who were identified as potentially disaffected youngsters.

The deployment of teachers and the scheduling of courses are clearly guided by the drive to improve student performance. Assistant principals purposefully use their more experienced teachers with challenging groups. Intervention strategies clearly demonstrate scheduling modifications to support students who are at risk of failing their assessments. Budgeting decisions are clearly focused on improving students' performance. For example, in English language arts it was agreed to assign additional staff members to provide support in English language learner classes and to provide double period 'ramp-up classes' for lower-performing grade 8 students

The majority of instruction is high quality and promotes effective learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge and actively engage students. Classroom management is good and students are able to demonstrate good levels of concentration and interest. However, learning outcomes are not always clear and teachers do not always check that the students understand their work. There is limited instructional differentiation in classes so that teachers do not always address the individual learning needs of students. Many teachers have not fully developed an effective use of technology as a tool for teaching and learning.

Student attendance is pursued assiduously, resulting in attendance of over 92% for the last three years. The drop-out rate is less than 5% with the majority of students meeting graduation standards. The school contacts home by telephone for first day absences and letters are sent home for lateness and absences of more than one day. School counselors regularly arrange home visits in response to persistent absence or tardiness. One student clearly expressed that 'to be cool here is to be actively engaged in your studies and general school life'.

**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.**

There is a shared commitment to the inclusion, achievement and personal development of all students. The teamwork of teachers and support staff is a strength of the school. The principal provides strong, reflective and dynamic school leadership. Parents, staff and students greatly respect his focused vision for the school. His genuine concern for student development and his presence around the building lies at the heart of the success of the school. One teacher commented that 'the principal makes the school small as every student and member of staff feels to be an important part of the family'.

Teachers are selected based on their ability to relate to students and their potential to support academic success in the classroom. New teachers are well supported by experienced mentors and 'buddies'. Lesson observations are well established in the school and all teachers have a formal observation with feedback at least once per year. In addition teachers regularly undertake classroom observations with their colleagues in order to share good classroom practice.

The school has a comprehensive and ongoing professional development program. The principal and assistant principals have participated in the Triple A, region 3 professional

development program and have cascaded 'the essential elements of instruction' through the departmental workshops and training days. Teachers are currently looking at congruence through questioning and activity as well as incorporating 'successful work and study habits' into their lessons. Departments are continually evaluating their performance and seeking new ways to improve the learning and progress of the students. Teachers are encouraged to look critically at their practice and to reflect with their colleagues on developments in teaching methods and styles of learning.

The school runs smoothly on a day to day basis because expectations and procedures are clear and reasonable. There is zero tolerance on many issues and the large number of students respond well to the clear boundaries. The school is well supported by the counsellors and the pupil personnel services. There is a very positive and adult ethos in the school resulting in high expectations and a sense of student commitment to the school. However, the school continues to advocate for the improvement of supervision, safety and security in the school with particular reference to the effective use of the safety officers.

**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 is continually evaluating its performance and seeking new ways to improve the learning and progress of the students. Staff make active use of the available data to review how successful their plans have been in meeting their targets. The Comprehensive Education Plan is a working document that has been collaboratively developed by the leadership team and the cabinet of assistant principals. The plan has whole-school priorities that form the basis of the subject action plans. Goals are specific with measurable outcomes and time scales. For example, all departments identified in their action plans African-American and Hispanic students who needed additional interventions and support.

There is a well-defined assessment program throughout the school so that student progress can be monitored and evaluated. Individual progress is closely monitored and parents are alerted if grades are unsatisfactory. Intervention strategies are quickly implemented and students who need extra support are identified. The principal and assistant principals are vigorous in analyzing the assessment information and identifying areas of underachievement in any classes or specific groups of students. Report card data is reviewed after each marking period and adjustments are made to instructional and individual student programs. For example, a number of special educational students were quickly integrated into general education classes after mid-year testing, with additional support staff in classes.

The school is very successful but staff are not complacent. They are constantly looking for new ways to improve the school, to identify underperformance and to raise the level of student success. The large number of students in the existing building is a major challenge for the school. The school is continuing to creatively address the issue of overcrowding so that appropriate programs and intervention continue to be provided. However, the popularity of Francis Lewis School is well earned and the principal and staff should be very proud of its achievement and success. It has strong capacity for further improvement and success as it moves on to its next stage of its development.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Francis Lewis High School [HS 430]</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>	∅	✓	+
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>	∅	✓	+
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