



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Curtis School**

**Public School 19**

**780 Post Avenue  
Staten Island  
NY 10310**

**Principal: Mary Petrone**

**Dates of review: December 14 - 15, 2006**

**Reviewer: Carol Foresta**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Curtis School is an elementary school serving students in pre-kindergarten through grade 5. There are 632 students currently enrolled. At 18%, there is a greater proportion of special education students than in similar and City schools.

The ethnic population of the school is diverse. The largest ethnic group represented in the school at 54.7% is Hispanic students. Black students make up 20% of enrollment, while 18.7% are White and 6.6% are Asian. The proportion of English language learners is 15.5% which is higher than in similar and City schools.

The percentage of students who are eligible for Title one funding is 71.5%, higher than similar and City schools.

At 93%, the school's attendance rate is about the same as other schools.

## Part 2: Overview

## **What the school does well**

- The principal and assistant principal quickly and accurately analyze data to identify the school's strengths and areas for development and to plan well-informed improvement strategies.
- The principal and assistant principal work as an effective team, initiating many strategies that bring order and structure to the school.
- There is systemic follow-up to monitor and support students in their learning.
- There is an effective system in place to monitor and support all staff in their development as professionals, viewing all members of the school as both learners and valuable contributors.
- The principal is well respected and is seen as hard-working, determined and caring, with a proven ability to manage change.
- Through a supportive culture of learning for students and staff, the leadership is trusted and effective at all levels in encouraging high expectations of learning and behavior.
- The school's drive to involve parents in all aspects of the school is successful and so they hold the school in high regard.
- The school has good links with outside providers who offer a range of enrichment activities for all students.
- The welcoming school climate encourages children to attend school regularly, to want to learn, to respect each other, and to behave well.

## **What the school needs to improve**

- Build the capacity of teachers to analyze data to provide focused planning and close alignment of work that caters to a wider range of student needs.
- Include instruction in social studies and science across grades and in all classes.
- Extend opportunities for all students to regularly experience music and art in school by integrating these curricular experiences into all grades and classrooms.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

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

The school is a vibrant, well-organized and lively place with a focus on learning and a positive climate that celebrates personal and academic success. The principal has successfully built trust amongst the staff, parents and students. She believes that every child in the school should have an individualized education plan and together with staff is working towards this goal.

All of the teachers have access to well-planned professional development to help them reach their personal goals. Teachers and administrators set goals together for the general school community. They plan collaboratively in grade-level meetings and have ambitious goals for improving both teacher practice and the achievement of students.

The school has successfully engaged parents and so a majority attends parent teacher meetings. Partnerships with parents and with local organizations and community groups enrich learning well.

### 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 an extensive range of test and its own assessment data to build a secure knowledge and understanding of what each student knows and is able to do in English language arts and mathematics. Although the test results were not available until October, staff analyzed test data and information from their own assessments to make the necessary decisions about programming the following year. The principal expects teachers to have the evidence to support their assessments of what children in their classes are capable of doing. Consequently, teachers carry out and keep records of a wide range of daily assessments from conversations during conferences, observations of students' learning and looking at their work, in up-to-date assessment binders. This enables them, the principal, assistant principal and coaches to have quick and easy reference to every student's progress notes. In addition, teachers have access to and use information from a range of tests and assessment programs, including Kaplan and Princeton Review, to align their instruction.

The school is a well-organized facility. The principal and assistant principal keep the data for their school at their fingertips and constantly refer to what it is telling them about individual and groups of students' performance and progress to substantiate their points. For example, assessment data showed that the school's largest group of level 1 students was located in 3rd grade. The school knows this and is able to explain clearly that it is a result of some students in doubt of promotion being given the opportunity of showing that they can succeed in the higher grade. Every support is in place to enable them to do this.

The school compares its performance with similar and other City schools to evaluate whether it is doing as well as it can. The performance of ethnic groups, special education students and English language learners is analyzed carefully and compared across subjects to note any differences and any upward or downward trends.

**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.**

School leaders and coaches work together to set the instructional goals for the school based on its data. They look at the benchmarks and then determine the next steps. Each coach keeps a binder that summarizes these goals for each grade and class. For example, the mathematics coach has identified specific skills in different classes for particular attention, which are used to individualize instruction for identified groups of students. The coaches analyze the data and work with teachers to look at how the assessments and data can be used to set interim updated goals for students’ progress in literacy and mathematics. The goals are used to focus teachers’ conferencing activities, the grouping of students and in planning learning objectives in lessons.

Teachers and coaches work together to ensure consistency in the assessment of students’ work. Together they talk about what ‘good work’ looks like and refer to the school-wide goals, set by the cabinet, when evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum, instruction, programs and intervention. In this way, goals drive the work of all members of staff.

Particular attention is given to students who need extra help to learn including special education students, English language learners and those close to moving up a level towards grade standards. Teachers and the special education liaison team use data well to set goals which focus on grade-specific performance indicators for each student in the self-contained classes. Appropriate interventions involve parents and help students to reach their goals and so most students reach acceptable grade standards every year.

Parents are fully involved in determining their children’s goals and school goals are shared during parent teacher meetings. Regular workshops and formal and informal conversations give them good guidance and advice so they encourage their children to do well in school and help them with learning at home. Students know teachers have high expectations of them and generally rise to these. In grade 5, students work with teachers to set their own goals, giving them ownership of their learning and helping them to know how to improve their work.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.**

**This area of the school’s work is well developed.**

The school ensures the mandated curriculum is in place and meets the needs of students. Literacy and mathematics programs are implemented that help meet the school’s goals and accelerate students progress. Some grade 4 and 5 students attend Life Designs to do dance, percussion, guitar, readers workshop, gym and games. However, science, social studies, library, technology, music and art are not regularly scheduled for all students

during the school day and so some students do not have the opportunity to take these subjects as part of their regular curriculum.

Most teachers use data to align instruction to the different learning needs of students in their classes. Notes from conferencing discussions and the range of information from comprehensive assessment systems are used to target specific skills and knowledge to individuals and groups of students. Special education students and English language learners benefit from instruction in separate classes and as push-in and pull-out group work in mainstream lessons. Students are generally attentive in lessons and most are interested. On occasion, when less practical work is planned, they find lessons less fun.

Budgeting, scheduling and staffing decisions respond to the school's improvement needs. For example, the school has found 25 minutes between 2nd and 3rd period each day for teachers to meet together and with out-of-classroom providers and cluster teachers to plan and evaluate their work collaboratively. A new first grade teacher has replaced a reading recovery teacher to keep class sizes small. Teaching materials and resources are readily available to support the curriculum and instruction.

Due to the small size of the school, staff know students' academic and personal needs well. Students' relationships with adults are mostly but not always positive. Most students agree they could go to their teacher if they had a question or a problem, though some say they would speak with their mother first. Relationships with each other are generally good and most students behave well.

The target attendance rate is 93%. The principal talks with any class whose attendance falls below this mark. There are awards for perfect attendance and acknowledgements for those who succeed. Students who have excellent attendance receive t-shirts at the end of each school year.

**Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The principal and assistant principal make hiring decisions based on the qualifications of prospective teachers and on personal interviews. The school looks for candidates trained in the workshop method of teaching whenever possible, and appreciates those who are already able to use data to plan and align programs and instruction. The coaches are making a real difference to the quality of learning in classes.

Every class has a common preparation time every day. The assistant principal, literacy and mathematics coaches sit in on these usually weekly but at least once a month to offer support and advice to the evaluation process. Teachers use data continually when making decisions about how to work with students although some find the wide range of data sources overwhelming at times.

Professional development activities are planned around the needs of the school and in response to information from data analysis. For example, Teachers' College has given considerable support to the school through its mentoring and consultancy programs. There has not been time yet for staff to visit each other's classes, though this is featured as part of the Teachers College partnership and will occur during the year. Mentors from a partner school often visit to work alongside teachers to extend the range of teaching

methods and instruction. As a result, lessons are interactive and students are involved in planning and directing learning.

The principal and assistant principal both observe classes on a daily and weekly basis. They have both formal and informal discussions with staff based on what they observe. Discussions build on strengths and help teachers to modify plans and goals. Teachers appreciate how helpful these observations and conversations are to them in their efforts to make curriculum adjustments.

Youth development strategies are implemented effectively through the Virtual Y and the Life Designs Program, which are held mainly after school. Outside services for special education students effectively help the school reach its goals. Close ties with community groups, education partners and local museum and galleries offer very good enrichment to professional development opportunities and students learning.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The school's Comprehensive Education Plan contains clear goals and action plans based on a secure analysis of assessment data. In this way, goals are linked closely to individual and groups of students' progress and end of year performance. Comparisons across subjects, classes and grades support the school's review process and benchmarks are used to gauge how well it is progressing towards its goals judged against student performance.

The school's plans are measured by results on interim assessments and end-of-year tests. After each set of interim assessments, teachers modify plans and goals for all students. All work is standards-based and this helps the school to make accurate measures of the school's and students' progress. Grade meetings follow an agenda set by the assistant principal, and center around discussing student work and how to use assessment to plan instruction, revise plans and programs to meet all students' needs. Curriculum teams discuss units of work and plans for their effectiveness in accelerating students' progress and helping the school reach its goals.

The principal sees the Comprehensive Education Plan as a fluid process and utilizes the action plans from this document to constantly focus on and drive school improvement. She uses the established team structure highly effectively to review all aspects of the school's performance and uses one set of evaluations to inform the schools next set of goals. In this way a cyclical process of review and revision is well established.

## **Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary**

<b>SCHOOL NAME: The Curtis School (PS 19)</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>	∅	✓	+
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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