



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Louis DeSario School

Public School 056

**250 Kramer Avenue
Staten Island
NY 10309**

Principal: Dean Scali

Dates of review: December 14 - 15, 2006

Reviewer: Joan L. Johnston

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Louis DeSario Public School is located on Staten Island and has 748 students enrolled in pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school's student population is made up of 90% White, 5% Hispanic, and 5% from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds. At 12%, the proportion of special education students is in line with similar and City schools. There is a much lower proportion of English language learners (1%) than in similar and City schools. The school is not eligible for Title I funding.

The school has a stable student population. Attendance figures at 94% match that of similar schools and are above the City average.

The principal and assistant principal are in their first year at the school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The recently appointed principal has quickly gained the respect and confidence of faculty, students, parents and staff.
- The principal and assistant principal complement each others' styles and skills and make an effective administrative team that successfully leads school improvement.
- The school monitors reading skills and development closely and so students in pre-kindergarten through 3 make good early gains in this aspect of English.
- The school provides a safe, orderly environment that enables student learning to be a key focus of the school day.
- There is a comprehensive curricular program that includes art, science, music, technology, physical education and library instruction.
- Parents are actively involved and supportive of the school.
- There are frequent parent workshops which focus on the instructional program and the needs of students.
- Student assessment data is regularly used to improve instruction and to support student learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Offer more opportunities for professional development and staff training in targeted areas.
- Further develop the school's system for tracking individual student performance and progress over time, making it more accessible for teachers to use to differentiate instruction.
- Establish systems for monitoring progress and performance in the social studies program.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well developed school.

The Louis DeSario Public School is a school that has many strengths. The school's supportive local community has high expectations for the school. The strong academic focus and sense of purpose in the school puts emphasis on creating a learning community that includes faculty, staff, students and parents. This year the parent study group is reading the book '*Raising Lifelong Learners*' to help them gain an understanding of how to support their children's learning at home.

A new principal, appointed this year, has quickly gained the support and confidence of the faculty and parents. Along with his assistant principal, they are putting into place effective systems for continuing school improvement. There is a positive climate in the school and a collaborative working relationship among all members of the school's community. The school building is well looked after and maintained.

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 gathers a great deal of data on student performance throughout the school year to gain a secure understanding of what each student knows and can do. It uses the information well to compare student achievement across subjects, classes and grades. Data from the Early Childhood Literacy Assessment System [ECLAS-2] gives a clear picture of the performance of students in kindergarten through grade 2. It provides a useful check on their progress over time and helps to determine where to place individuals on guided reading levels. Data from Directed Reading Activities [DRA] gives good additional information on students' reading levels and literacy skill development. In addition, the Princeton Review gives detailed interim assessment information and, along with writing samples and mathematics assessments, enables the school to monitor achievement in English language arts and mathematics throughout these classes and grades.

At grades 3 through 5, State and City test results give useful information about the school's and students' performance. The principal accesses these data reports as soon as he can and analyzes the information by class and grade before reviewing results with teachers. This data is not yet in a teacher-friendly format and so not all teachers use it without guidance when planning classes. Data is used well to compare the performance of individual students, to adjust groupings and to plan and deliver academic support to those who are at risk of falling below grade standards and challenge for those capable of reaching the next level. Data is analyzed closely to determine any trends in the performance of different ethnic groups and that of boys and girls. The performance of English language learners is closely monitored so the school is clear about their progress.

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.

In the fall of the each school year, teachers set long-term curriculum and instructional goals for each student in reading, writing and mathematics. A key goal this year was to implement the balanced literacy program to raise attainment in reading and writing across the school. Measures and timescales enable the school to evaluate performance in these subjects across classes and grades. The new assistant principal and teachers at each grade level work together to develop rubrics, and plan mini-lessons, units of study and writing workshops to identify interim goals and ensure assessments are accurate and teaching supports students’ next steps in learning.

The school tailors academic intervention services well to the needs of special education students and the small proportion of English language learners. Color-coded files in each classroom track the performance of these students in identified skill areas. As a result, the number reaching acceptable grade standards in English language arts and mathematics is rising.

Parents are very active in the school. Parents have experienced an ‘evolutionary role’ as they have moved from fund-raisers to partners in education. They are proud of their contribution to the arts program at the school and close partnership with the Center for Arts Education. The parent coordinator organizes numerous parent workshops that enable parents to help and support their children’s learning at home. These sessions are well attended because they focus on relevant topics such as the Everyday Mathematics program and preparing children for the upcoming English language arts assessment. Consequently, some parents volunteer to serve as Learning Leaders to assist students who need extra help to learn. Teachers and parents share student goals at formal consultation meetings and parents are welcome to come into school at other times to discuss their children’s progress.

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 has well-organized curriculum maps and schedules that show clearly how the mandated curriculum, a range of other subjects and enrichment activities can be delivered. As a result, the school has this year implemented a rich curriculum that meets the needs of learners well. Arts subjects are catered for through various projects and themes that use the skills of parents and visiting artists effectively. Science and technology are taught regularly.

Teachers recognize that they are accountable for improving instruction and student performance. They use interim assessment reports and data from State tests to target instruction to the needs of individual students in their classes. They differentiate instruction in the classroom by having students break into small groups with specific learning goals and target questions to probe the students’ understanding, and support and challenge the thinking of different performance groups.

Budget, scheduling and staffing decisions are based on data and so meet the aims of the school and promote students' progress. Resources are readily available to cater fully for programs and instructional needs. The mathematics coach oversees the teacher resource center where teachers can find a wide array of materials to support classroom learning in both English language arts and mathematics. The principal is currently exploring partnerships and grants to supplement the school's budget and enable the school to hire more staff to plan additional programs to help meet its goals.

Students are engaged in their learning and feel that learning is fun at their school. They believe that 'teachers explain things well and help you if you don't understand something.' If they are absent, they can count on a homework buddy to get information and assignments to them. Students believe they are treated fairly and feel comfortable going to their teachers, the staff or the parent coordinator if they have an academic or personal problem. One student summed it up by saying 'This is a great school!'

Attendance is monitored rigorously so most students attend regularly and get to school on time.

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 new principal and assistant principal recognize that they have inherited a school that has improved considerably in the past few years and that is going from strength to strength. Parents feel that the principal has made an effective start, in that he is very approachable, seeks their involvement, and is always looking for ways to improve the school. He is visible around the building. Students like it that he knows all of their names and deals with problems as they arise. Teachers feel supported by their principal and assistant principal, who visit classrooms regularly and meet with teachers to improve teaching and learning in the school.

The school has a core of veteran staff with some new and younger teachers joining the team. The principal has embraced a workshop model to develop a 'learning staff.' Newer teachers are paired up with experienced staff members at each grade level to assure curricular alignment and a consistent approach at that grade level. For example, training has been implemented for all staff to understand the guided reading approach. However, there remains a need for more time to further improve the professional development program to link closely with the school's priorities. The school uses faculty meetings, professional development days, and common planning times to maximum advantage. Monthly grade level meetings focus on enhancing the skills and knowledge base of each team of teachers. Teachers plan learning and review teaching methods and programs collaboratively during these grade level team meetings and share resources to support learning.

This year there is a concerted effort to better understand and utilize data to improve results and to move more students into level 4 performance on State assessments. For example, the mathematics coach has focused on making sure Everyday Mathematics is implemented smoothly into the 5th grade. In addition, to support the school's emphasis on the writing process, faculty is reading the text '*Units of Study for Teaching Writing*' for a collaborative study activity. Teachers have received training at Columbia University-

Teachers College and are sharing effective practices. The new assistant principal is acting as a literacy coach to support this process.

A variety of related service providers, including a guidance counselor, social worker and school psychologist give special education students the additional support they need to make good progress. Staff teams meet regularly to review the progress of students who are referred to them. Additionally, there is an extended day Monday through Thursday for tutoring and academic support services which supports the needs of students well.

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 school's Comprehensive Education Plan provides a blueprint for goals and interventions. Data is reviewed on a regular basis and students who fall behind are scheduled for extra support. Interim assessments such as Monitoring for Results and the Comprehensive Assessment of Reading Strategies provide teachers with an ongoing record of student achievement or areas in need of improvement. At this point, interim measures towards meeting the school's long-term goals have not been established because the senior leadership is so new. For example, the social studies program was identified as an area in need of attention for this academic year. The school's systems are not set up to evaluate progress towards meeting its goals in this subject and so has to wait until the results from the 5th grade assessment are returned later this year.

The school's system for tracking individual student performance over time is effective in evaluating progress and programs and to make adjustments and revisions when required. However, it is too new to be fully established in practice. Teachers are utilizing data to improve individual student performance and to monitor progress, but still need additional training and support to use it independently. This is a stated goal of the principal once training for the new State system becomes available later this year.

The principal uses focused walkthroughs, teacher observations and evaluations to check that agreed goals are being implemented consistently. He expects to see the use of rubrics and charts to support students' writing, the use of hands-on materials in mathematics instruction and evidence of differentiating instruction.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Louis DeSario School (PS 56)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score			X

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.

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

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.	∅	✓	+
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.	∅	✓	+
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.	∅	✓	+
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	