

Hector Fontanez School

**Hector Fontanez School
4125 Carpenter Avenue
Bronx
NY 10466**

Principal: Ms Alice Brown

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**Reviewer: John Godwood
Cambridge Education**

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Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Hector Fontanez School is a large elementary school with 1150 students from Kindergarten through fifth grade. Most students are from low income families, one third of who are on public assistance. 88% of students are Title 1 Eligible. 10% of students have special educational needs and 12% are English language learners. The school has a significant number of recent immigrants. Attainment on entry is below average.

The school has student teachers from Pace University. It has a partnership with Fordham University for professional development in the classroom use of technology. A partnership with the Museum of Natural History enriches the 5th grade curriculum in science. Through a relationship with Chess in the Schools, students have the opportunity to learn chess in lessons or at after school classes.

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Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and school leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in students' performance and have a clear strategy to raise standards that has already begun to have an impact, although it is still at an early stage.
- State and City test results in grades 3 through 5 improved in 2005 and are broadly in line with similar schools, although slightly lower in grade 4.
- The new curriculum map for literacy provides teachers in all grades with a good basis for planning and clear progression from one grade to the next.
- Assessment procedures in reading and mathematics provide close monitoring of students' progress, from which teachers plan additional support for students at risk.
- Underachieving students are given well coordinated interventions and are well supported by a network of teachers. A wide range of programs and resources are used and are regularly modified to match students' needs.
- Most teachers work well together and are highly motivated to support their students.
- Most students are engaged in lessons and respond well to their teachers.
- The staffing structure and opportunities for professional development are aligned carefully with the strategy for raising standards.
- Staff have been trained in the use of data to assess and improve students' progress, and are held accountable for the standards that students reach.
- Good collaboration between school leaders, teachers and parents through the School Leadership Team and its subcommittees leads to wide consultation in planning and good links between evaluation, planning and classroom work.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue the existing effective strategy to develop the curriculum map and assessment procedures for writing, science and social studies.
- Involve students more in their own learning through making learning objectives more explicit in lessons and considering ways of giving them targets for their longer term achievement.
- Analyze the growing assessment data to provide summaries of students' overall progress and, as computerized data becomes available, the progress made by groups of students, and uses this in forward planning.
- Use professional development and coaching to increase the consistency of teachers' skill in the workshop model and in engaging students through interesting activities and a well balanced curriculum.
- Ensure that the achievement targets in the comprehensive education plan are linked to students' prior achievement and that the plan includes arrangements for periodic monitoring of progress.

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Part 3: Main Findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

Standards in State and City tests are broadly in line with similar schools. The principal, who has been in post for almost two years, has a clear and effective strategy to improve standards through a well planned curriculum and close assessment of students' progress, with well coordinated intervention for students who struggle. The staffing structure provides teachers with good support and joint planning time. The quality of teaching varies, but most teachers work well together and are highly motivated to support their students.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria.

Quality Statement 1: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor and facilitate the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient overall.

The school has a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses in students' performance from its analysis of State and City test results. It compares its performance with that of similar schools and with its own past performance to help to prioritize where it needs to improve next.

Over the past two years, the school has developed a systematic and comprehensive process of assessing students' progress in reading and mathematics, using a broad range of assessment tests. This provides good quality, objective, data that is regularly updated and gives teachers and the principal a good knowledge of each student's level of attainment and enables them to identify students who need additional support. The school has developed a very useful tool that relates the levels on different reading tests and enables teachers to chart the progress that students make from kindergarten through 5th grade.

The assessment is a key part of the school's strategy to raise standards. It has already begun to show some impact. State and City test results in grades 3 to 5 improved in 2005 and are broadly in line with similar schools, although slightly lower in grade 4. The school is aware that it needs to extend the assessment procedures to include writing, science and social studies.

Each teacher has good quality data on the achievements of each student in their own class. The data is monitored by the principal. However, the data is not summarized to show the progress of students overall. The school is aware from published data of the achievement of different groups of students, but it does not analyze its own assessment data in this way.

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Quality Statement 2: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The Comprehensive Education Plan is developed collaboratively by the School Leadership Team and its subcommittees. It involves interested parents and teachers as well as school leaders. This wide collaboration strengthens planning through a good understanding of its impact in the classroom. The plan provides a clear statement of the school's strategy to raise standards, although it does not include any detail on the steps within the strategy. It includes measurable goals for students' attainment but these are not in all cases realistic because they are not directly linked to students' prior achievements.

Most students know the level at which they are working and have a general idea of their goals for improvement. They receive good feedback from teachers. They do not, however, have specific targets for what they should achieve. The feedback is more developed in reading than in other areas of the curriculum, because students know their reading level on a scale of A-Z, and know the level they are trying to get to.

The attention given to improving the performance of students in greatest need of improvement is well developed. Students are identified carefully using assessment data. Additional Academic Intervention Services (AIS) are well coordinated by the class teacher and AIS teacher. It includes focused small group instruction, after-school classes, Saturday school and summer school. Students have a personal intervention plan and their progress is very well monitored and recorded. Some students gain significantly in their confidence and attainment. They feel well supported.

Parents feel well informed of how well their children are doing through a combination of the home-school folder, the report cards three times a year and the opportunities to discuss these with teachers. Those who attend the monthly curriculum meetings have a general idea of what children should know by the end of each module.

Most teachers work well together and are highly motivated to support their students.

Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The curriculum is proficient. In literacy and mathematics, it has been planned effectively to enable systematic assessment of students' progress. The literacy curriculum has been built by the teachers in working groups and provides a clear basis for lesson planning and good progression from one grade to the next. It is now being evaluated and revised after one year of operation. The school plans to build on this effective curriculum planning to include science, social studies and character education. The curriculum includes too little physical education because the school has limited gym and outdoor space. The

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curriculum is low on creative activity, including music and art. There is a good range of extra-curricular clubs after school, including chess and drama.

Staffing and budgeting decisions are aligned well with the school's strategy for raising standards and improving youth development. For example, teachers in each grade are provided with common curriculum planning time, with support from an assistant principal. An intervention teacher is linked to each grade to support underachieving students. The school has appointed human resources coordinators to support students' behavior and develop the character education program.

The quality of teaching is sound but varies. In most lessons, students are orderly and pay good attention. They are encouraged to participate actively and to express their ideas and understanding clearly to the whole class. In many lessons, students work sensibly in pairs as 'talk partners', although in some classes this is not always well organized and too much time is lost where this is the case. In the better lessons, students are highly engaged because the activities are interesting, but some weaker lessons lack structure and students lose interest. Teachers vary in the level of skill with which they implement the school's expected workshop model. They do not routinely ensure that students are clear about the learning objectives of the lesson.

Teachers are accountable for their students' performance. Assessments of reading and mathematics are done regularly according to a school schedule. The principal collects and reviews the results, checking with teachers where individual students do not make enough progress. The principal and assistant principals regularly observe lessons and provide teachers with constructive feedback. There are clear strategies to improve the performance of weaker teachers. Teachers have some opportunities to observe each other's lessons.

Most students enjoy their lessons and behave well. They have some concerns about the poor behavior of a minority of students, which often takes the form of verbal bullying at lunchtime; this is related to gang activity after school. The school is fully aware of this and is working hard to improve behavior through including character education in the curriculum and a new scheme that rewards positive behavior.

Most staff is highly committed to their students' achievement and welfare. Students feel that if they have a problem, it will be resolved by either their class teacher or a member of the administration.

Attendance is monitored carefully and action is taken where there are concerns. Despite this, however, attendance is a little below that of similar schools.

Quality Statement 4: 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.

New teachers are selected on the basis of clear criteria that include high expectations for students' achievement and an ability to measure that through the use of data.

All teachers have had professional development in the use of assessment data to support

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students' progress. There are clear procedures that all teachers follow to check students' progress in reading and mathematics. The school is planning to extend this to writing and the other subjects in the curriculum next year. Teachers feel that the professional development is well focused on curriculum planning and assessment. There has been some professional development on the school's expected teaching methods, although the high workload of senior staff has limited the impact of this over the past year. There is some inconsistency in teachers' skill in implementing these methods.

The school evaluates its performance regularly. For example, a major 'learning walk' identified a weakness in assessing writing that is now being addressed. The performance of each class is reviewed regularly by the principal. Teachers meet weekly in grade teams to evaluate the performance of their students, develop the curriculum and provide support for teachers. In response to teachers' request, the principal established two common prep periods each week – one for planning and one for professional development.

The principal is respected for her clear vision of how to improve the school. She consults staff and parents and acknowledges areas for improvement. She has provided staff with a clear direction and appropriate support through the staffing structure and common planning time. Most staff work well together. The school runs smoothly with regard to the organization of teaching, curriculum and assessment. There is less clarity over the procedures for managing students' behavior and some lessons are disturbed by the poor behavior of a minority. The school is introducing clearer expectations and procedures for behavior.

Quality Statement 5: 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 effectiveness of the additional intervention for underachieving students is regularly evaluated after each assessment. The programs are adjusted flexibly to meet students' needs.

School leaders and the School Leadership Team regularly review the school's progress in implementing its strategy for raising standards. For example, the effective curriculum planning for literacy is now being reviewed, improved and extended to include other subjects. However, the Comprehensive Education Plan does not include planned arrangements for monitoring the progress in implementing the plan.

Other key observations

The school has some severe building constraints that affect the curriculum and behavior. Students have lunch in several shifts because of the small size of the dining room. The number of children dining at any one time in the confined area causes some distress. A lack of gym space places limitations on the curriculum.

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There are a small number of very active parents, but the school has found it difficult to engage the majority of parents in its work. The school and PTA are working hard to improve this through workshops and monthly meetings on the curriculum. Parents' views are sought through questionnaires. Parents spoken to during the review felt confident that their concerns are always heard and dealt with.

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PART 4: EVALUATION CRITERIA GRADE SUMMARY

Quality Statement 1: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor and facilitate the student's progress over time.	o	✓	+
<p>1.1 The school uses available data (e.g., diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments, students work products, standards-based portfolios, attendance, descriptive review, security data, etc.) and generates its own to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of how well each student, classroom, grade level, and other important categories of students and the school are:</p> <p>(1) currently performing, and (2) progressing over time, on English Language Arts, mathematics, and other important academic subjects.</p> <p>Criteria for measuring student progress are "objective" when they are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • standards-based, • consistent across students, • capable of revealing progress or a lack of it over time and ways to close the gap between current and expected practice, <p>and when they allow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the performance of different students to be compared, and • learning activity to be broken down into component parts so strengths and weaknesses on each sub-activity may be identified. 		X	
<p>1.2 The school makes effective use of the data to assess the performance and progress of students by racial and ethnic groups, English Language Learners and special education students, and all other categories of interest to the school.</p> <p>{This criterion and the next are partially aspirational as of now. City and State Report Cards and Division of Accountability and Assessment reports provide only some of the necessary data. The NYC DOE will soon provide schools with fuller access to better data.}</p>	X		
<p>1.3 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, racial and ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.</p>		X	
Quality Statement 2: 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.	o	✓	+
<p>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 it develops plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.</p>		X	
<p>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 warranting attention.</p>		X	
<p>2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.</p>			X
<p>2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. That information is central to setting reasonably challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.</p>		X	
<p>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</p>		X	

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Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	0	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with the school's high expectations and improvement plans and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals.		X	
3.2 Decisions about the use of teacher and student time are based on the organization of the day and week needed to inform teachers about each student's performance and next learning steps, set goals and plans for improved student learning, and implement and continuously improve plans for reaching stated goals.		X	
3.3 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.4 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.5 Teachers are accountable for student outcomes. 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	
3.6 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	
3.7 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.		X	
3.8 Instructional programs actively engage students.		X	
3.9 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.		X	

Quality Statement 4: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	0	✓	+
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 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 Leaders, faculty, and staff share the same goals and frequently evaluate themselves, their interventions and each other's plans and interventions, including, when possible, by comparing outcomes across classrooms and schools. The school monitors its performance and tackles weaknesses. Even in areas where the school is successful, leadership is not complacent, but aims to improve further. The goal in all cases is to improve student and school performance and progress.		X	
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results and revision of plans takes place in teams.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.		X	
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear and are generally followed.		X	

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Quality Statement 5: 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.	0	✓	+
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 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 interim 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 each successive phase of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve students' academic outcomes.		X	