



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Lewis H. Latimer School

Elementary School 056

**170 Gates Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11238**

Principal: Deborah Clark- Johnson

Dates of review: January 28 - 29, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Tony Boys

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Lewis H. Latimer is an elementary school with 348 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 93% Black, 5% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 0.4% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 90.3%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 81% eligibility.

The school has barrier-free access for students with disabilities and shares its premises with a middle school housed in the same building. The majority of students live within the school's neighborhood zone but the rising cost of housing in the area is causing some mobility in the population. Many families who have moved out of the area choose to continue to send their children to this school, despite the travelling distances involved. The school admits a significant number of students from families in temporary housing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and community share a very clear vision of the school's future direction and role in meeting the needs of students and parents.
- The school is very successful in maintaining a wide range of partnerships with outside agencies to support and enhance the curriculum.
- The curriculum is broad and relevant with many opportunities for enrichment through activities taking place outside the school day.
- The principal and administration monitor instruction well, giving constructive feedback to help teachers improve and extend their skills.
- Well-planned curriculum programs enable teachers to gather meaningful data on students' progress and achievement.
- Teachers have a very good knowledge of the performance and progress of individual students due to the wide range of assessment data they collect.
- Teachers use assessment data well to plan instruction that meets individual students' needs.
- The school conveys high expectations to all the community and involves parents very well in their children's education.
- Procedures to encourage and reward good attendance are very effective.
- The school has very effective procedures to ensure smooth running and provides a very positive learning environment.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend further the school's use of data to set rigorous and measurable improvement goals for all students.
- Enhance the school's strategies for raising achievement by focusing on students and subjects where there is most need of improvement.
- Revise and extend professional development to support teachers in using data to set specific improvement goals.
- Make full use of interim goals in planning to enable easier monitoring of the effectiveness of improvement strategies.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

The school places care for the individual and the family at the center of its philosophy. The principal has a very clear vision of the school's role in meeting the needs of students and parents. She has communicated this vision very successfully to the community and the school has established a very wide range of external partnerships. These enrich and enhance the curriculum by providing opportunities to experience a wide range of academic and social activities that take place within and beyond the school day. The principal and administration monitor the curriculum and instruction closely to ensure that they meet students' individual learning needs. This results in well-planned programs that enable teachers to assess students' progress effectively and to have a good knowledge of each individual's achievements to inform planning. Teachers receive good feedback that helps them to hone their skills and to improve instruction. This effective monitoring has a positive influence on instruction and progress. Teachers use data to set goals for each student but these are not yet specific and rigorous enough for students to understand exactly what they need to do to improve. The school analyzes assessment data to inform planning and goal setting but plans do not yet focus closely enough on the progress of students and subjects most in need of improvement. Teachers have good opportunities for professional development and dialogue to extend and enhance their skills. Training has focused well on data management but has not been closely targeted on supporting teachers in setting specific improvement goals to increase their understanding of this aspect of the process.

The school gives a high priority to parental involvement and conveys high expectations of work and conduct to all in the community. As a result, parents are very positive about the education the school provides. Staff, students and parents take pride in the school's appearance and facilities, affirming that the school provides a safe, secure and positive learning environment. Clear and effective procedures to ensure smooth running and good behavior enhance the learning environment, providing a calm, orderly and harmonious atmosphere. Arrangements to encourage and reward good attendance are effective and have a positive impact on students' progress.

The school has collaborative processes for involving staff in strategic planning, resulting in plans that focus well on improving achievement. The progress and effectiveness of these strategies can not at present be easily monitored because they do not make enough use of specific interim goals to provide checks at intervals along the way. Issues raised in the previous Quality Review have been tackled effectively by improving the use of data and enhancing the role of technology in data management. The data inquiry team meets regularly to review the performance of its focus group.

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 the student's progress over time.

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

Teachers assess students work and progress thoroughly, using a range of formal and informal assessments. End-of-unit tests include both oral and written assessments and student self-assessments. Special education students and English language learners undergo the same range of assessments, supplemented by assessments that are specific to their needs. All teachers have laptop computers with software that allows them to record and analyze assessment data. In addition, administration produce standardized charts to record and analyze data. These systems ensure that teachers have a very good understanding of individual students' progress on which to base planning and instruction. Administration has placed great emphasis on training and support to enable teachers to understand data and to handle it confidently. Teachers confirm that this has been effective in increasing their skills in data management. Professional development does not, as of yet, include training to support teachers in setting specific and measurable improvement goals based on assessment data.

The school has effective systems for comparing the performance of different groups of students and for looking at its own performance over time. This includes tracking the performance of gender groups and specific cohorts to identify trends in performance. As a result the school has introduced an all boys group to Saturday academy to improve boys' achievement. The school has also made good use of comparisons with similar schools in its own network to share and benefit from effective practice.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

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

Teachers use assessment data to track the progress of individual students and to inform planning. They work collaboratively in grade conferences, faculty conferences and at common preparation times to consider student data in focusing on the progress of individuals and groups of students. This approach has ensured that students consistently meet state targets for annual yearly progress and that the number of students performing at higher levels in standardized tests is increasing. The systems do not yet focus closely enough on identifying students and subjects where improvement is most needed and this has led to inconsistencies in the progress of some cohorts. Teachers also use assessment data to set general improvement goals for students but these are not yet rigorous and specific enough for students to understand exactly how they can improve their work and progress.

The school values and encourages parental involvement in students' education. Effective communication ensures that staff, students and parents understand the school's high expectations in terms of work and conduct. This ensures a high level of parental support and satisfaction. Parents affirm that communication through formal and informal channels is very good and that it is easy to contact all staff, including the principal, to discuss their

children's progress. They value the school's efforts to arrange alternative times for meetings, to accommodate parents' work and family commitments. The parent coordinator and teachers also provide effective means for parents to give the school information about their children's learning needs, through formal and informal meetings. In addition, the school conducts an annual parent survey. The resulting level of parental involvement has a very positive effect on students' progress. One parent affirmed that communication is so effective that "PS 56 becomes a habit you don't want to break".

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

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

The curriculum is broad and relevant, giving students the full range of mandatory subjects as well as extra opportunities to study the arts, recreational programs and to further their academic progress beyond the school day, including Saturdays. This enhances learning and progress considerably. The school has chosen its curriculum and instructional programs very carefully to provide courses that have in-built assessment schemes. This ensures that teachers have good access to ongoing student assessment data that helps them to focus on progress and raising achievement. Administration monitors instruction well through formal and informal classroom observations and through scrutiny of planning and assessment records. This ensures that instruction engages students' interest and meets their different learning needs within a positive, safe and inclusive learning environment. Budgeting and staffing decisions are clearly focused on promoting achievement and progress. This is evident in the efforts the school has made to provide an excellent library and dedicated computer and science labs. The school has also created a full-time science teacher position that supports and enhances the teaching of this subject.

Good relationships in the school have a very positive effect on the students' academic and social progress, due to the high priority placed on care and respect. This can be seen in classrooms and around the school. Attendance is good and still improving due to effective procedures for encouraging and rewarding good attendance. Parents are very positive about the influence this has on students' progress.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to 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 administration carry out frequent classroom observations, giving constructive feedback that helps teachers improve and enhance their skills. The school also uses classroom observation and teacher surveys to decide on professional development needs. Teachers appreciate the way in which training can be customized to their own requirements. The school provides good opportunities for teachers to meet together to discuss instruction and to share effective practice. This includes arranging intervisitations to allow teachers to evaluate one another's instruction. These arrangements for classroom observation and identifying training needs have a positive effect on the quality of learning and instruction.

The school runs very smoothly because of its clear procedures to encourage effective learning and good behavior. New teachers feel that the school has good induction

procedures and supports them well. Procedures are understood well by staff, students and parents, ensuring that the learning environment is calm, orderly and harmonious. The excellent range of partnerships the school has with outside agencies enhances students' academic and personal growth. These include commercial organizations, charities and educational groups that provide a very wide range of academic, recreational and cultural activities within and beyond the school day. The influence of these partnerships has a major effect in enriching the curriculum and in improving the school's equipment and facilities, through providing grant aid. This has a very positive effect on the students' progress and breadth of experience.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The principal has a very clear vision of the school's place and role in the community, with care for the individual and the family at the center of its philosophy. She communicates this vision very well to staff, students and parents, ensuring that the school remains focused on raising achievement and building relationships. An atmosphere of care and respect is encouraged and evident in all aspects of school life. This promotes the students' learning and progress very well. Parents sum up the school as providing "good foundations, a good curriculum and a good education". Parents agreed with one parent's view that the school "provides a safe haven" for many students.

The school bases its strategic planning on data from a wide range of sources and on its desire to provide a broad and relevant education that develops students academically and socially. This ensures that planning focuses on fostering students' educational and social growth. The wide range of opportunities the school provides through its extended day and Saturday programs is evidence of its focus on meeting the needs of its community. Strategic plans have clear aims and success criteria that enable final outcomes to be monitored and strategies revised. These arrangements for monitoring and revising plans do not at present make full use of interim goals to make it easier to track the progress and effectiveness of strategies and to make changes quickly if necessary.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Lewis H Latimer School	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
Quality Score				X	

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?				X	
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?				X	
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X	

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?			X		
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?			X		
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?				X	
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?				X	
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?				X	
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.					
To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?				X	
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?					X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4				X	

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.					
To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?			X		
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?			X		
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?			X		
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X		

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped