



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Lefferts Park School**

**Elementary School 112**

**7115 15th Avenue  
New York  
NY 11228**

**Principal: Louise Verdemare - Alfano**

**Dates of review: December 4 - 5, 2007**

**Lead Reviewer: Anne Evanoff**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Lefferts Park School is an elementary school with 467 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 21% Hispanic, 29% White, 48% Asian students and 2% in other categories. The student body includes 24% English language learners and 2% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 -2007 was 96.8%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 66% eligibility.

The school has been identified as a model school for Collaborative Communities of Practice. This designation provides teachers from other schools in the area with the opportunity to visit Lefferts Park School to observe best practice.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal has a clear vision for the future development of the school and uses data strategically to plan school improvement.
- The principal consistently gathers and generates data, to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of students and to improve planning and monitoring of progress.
- The school has developed efficient systems to support teachers in analyzing data to identify next steps and set goals for accelerating learning.
- Teachers engage in regular meetings to collaboratively discuss the use of data, to set targets, to plan and differentiate instruction and monitor progress effectively.
- The school has selected core curricular approaches that align with State standards to ensure that the curriculum being taught is also the one being tested.
- The principal holds teachers accountable for the progress of their students and ensures that data is used to inform planning.
- The principal supports new and experienced teachers to develop high-yield instructional strategies that improve student learning.
- The school has established relationships with outside agencies and organizations to enrich and enhance student growth.
- The school consistently uses periodic assessments to measure the progress of students in the core subjects as well as the effectiveness of interventions.
- The principal has implemented procedures that allow the school to operate smoothly; as a result, attendance is high and students are well behaved.

### What the school needs to improve

- Provide students and their parents with more information about each student's goals for improvement in the core subjects and support parents in helping their children improve.
- Use the data from periodic assessments to develop interim goals for improving student outcomes in order to better monitor progress and ensure student success.

## 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.**

Lefferts Park School offers a warm and welcoming learning environment where parents, students, and staff work together “to achieve their very best”. Parents describe the school as a place where “the sky is the limit” because of the high quality of instruction and the way in which the performance of every child is tracked. Students view the staff as caring and kind and feel that teachers set high expectations for them to achieve. They are eager to learn and; as a result, attendance is good and parent support is high.

Since the last review there has been a focus on incorporating the use of technology into classrooms. The school purchased laptops for students and provided training for all teachers to ensure appropriate use of the equipment. Some teachers are also experimenting with the use of a smart board to enhance instruction. The school addressed space accommodations for art and music by adjusting schedules to provide a better shared space. Although the current tracking system is highly effective in monitoring student progress, the principal continues to “streamline” it, to tailor instruction to the individual student and to effectively align benchmark assessments with the standards. She has also established structures and systems for tracking and monitoring student progress at regular intervals. The school has not yet used interim data to develop interim goals to determine how much progress students have made towards year end goals. The principal holds teachers accountable for their instructional practices and follows up with them to support differentiated planning and the use of appropriate interventions to meet the learning needs of students. The inquiry team is engaged in using data to identify its target population and aligning interventions and procedures with student learning needs. Students are actively involved in the after school program, which offers a broad range of activities to promote leadership development and growth in its students. There is mutual trust and respect among all stakeholders because of the dedication the staff demonstrate in their daily interactions with students and parents. The school does not share whole school goals and individual student goals in the core subjects sufficiently with parents to involve them fully in supporting their children at home.

### **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.**

The principal knows the strengths and weaknesses of students in the school very well and analyzes the school's data thoroughly to identify the trends and patterns in the school across classes and grades and by sub-group. She is very effective in seeking news ways to streamline the collection of soft data to generate realistic student outcomes and effectively tailor instruction to meet individual student needs. Although the school values the many formal sources of data, it also utilizes more informal measures that drive daily instruction, such as conference notes, running records, unit math assessments and portfolios. The school is highly effective in organizing the data into assessment binders with a section for each student. Teachers can see at a glance which students fall into what instructional groupings, based on tracking sheets that are colour coded for different content items and for different learning needs.

The principal regularly compares data from year to year, cohort to cohort and in relation to similar schools across gender groups, ethnic groups, English second language groups and special education students in order to better understand the needs of the school and plan instruction. This analysis ensures that teachers have a rich understanding of their students and a common baseline with which to measure growth. Students are grouped by what the school calls "subject intervention", which focuses on three major elements in reading instruction; for example, fluency, decoding and comprehension. This practice results in more effective instruction and learning in each of the core areas. Training for staff in understanding and using data has been systematic, purposeful and successful. The school has focused on building the capacity of staff to use data to drive instruction through the effective use of ARIS. The staff received some major training on how to access the data from the ACUITY and use it to plan instruction more effectively. Teachers regularly engage in collaborative meetings to plan unit lessons and examine work samples in order to make greater gains with their students in the core subjects.

**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.**

The principal engages the staff in collaborative faculty meetings, grade conferences and instructional planning meetings to examine the data and set school-wide and classroom goals. Classroom teachers use the data effectively to set student goals for improvement and they review this data in depth and in detail as they plan instruction for each "target group" within the grade. This careful planning procedure guarantees that students with specific requirements receive instructional approaches that target those needs. For example, the data indicated that the students who are in the greatest need of improvement are those students who are losing proficiency. Now that ARIS breaks down each proficiency level into its component parts, the staff can see clearly where in the level 3 band each student is achieving and the skills which they have. This analysis has positioned the school and the inquiry team very well for effectively addressing the achievement gap for this group of students.

The staff consistently meet to develop strategic action plans that address learning goals, instructional plans, roles and responsibilities and timelines for monitoring and assessing next steps. There is high level of collaboration in planning, since each teacher has organized their data by learning need using an item analysis for each of the core

subjects. The principal and the staff have established high expectations for learning and consistently share those expectations at every opportunity. Students and parents are keenly aware that the school expects them to improve year on year and, as a result, students willingly work hard to reach those expectations. The school continually works at providing easy access for parents to school information through a variety of sources such as monthly newsletters and weekly class notes. Although whole school goals have been shared with the community in a variety of forums, the principal recognizes that there is a need to regularly update parents on the learning goals set for their children and to plan more workshops on how to support their children at home. Parents feel comfortable sharing information with staff because they know that it will be used to make a positive difference

**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 school has been identified as a model school for Collaborative Communities of Practice, and staff have been given the opportunity to attend Columbia’s Teachers College Program. Teachers attend workshops facilitated by a variety of reading and writing project staff developers. This training has resulted in a highly skilled staff, that use data effectively and efficiently to drive instruction. Part of this success can be attributed to the consistent use of curriculum mapping and curriculum resources binders as two effective tools for planning engaging and compelling learning experiences. Students note how much fun it is to take part in math games through the Everyday Math Program and they like learning about math as it applies to everyday living. In addition to the academic program, the school also provides instruction in violin, recorder, and ballroom dancing which widens the experiences students receive.

Teachers meet regularly to plan their lessons and reflect on their practices. Using detailed curriculum maps which outline units of study in reading, writing, math, social studies and word study, they constantly engage in reflective practices and ongoing conversations about what works and what does not work so well. This high level of professional dialogue enables the staff to engage confidently in identifying learning gaps and revising their lessons to better meet the learning needs of students. These exemplary practices have created a common culture, common expectations, and a common language in the school. Teachers effectively differentiate instruction for whole class, small group, and individual students in every classroom during each lesson. This model of instruction enables the school to continually assess student learning and to plan more effectively. The principal and the instructional team also use the data to make strategic decisions that involve the budget, staffing and scheduling. For example, the administration allocated funds to purchase additional resources to address specific weaknesses in each of the core areas and hire extra support staff in math to provide push-in support. With all of these rich learning opportunities and effective monitoring systems it is not surprising that the attendance rate is very high. Children are keen to be at school and to be actively involved in learning.

**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 is passionate about her work as an instructional leader and is committed to building a professional, collaborative learning community where every staff member contributes to the growth of the school in a positive way. The focus on excellence is demonstrated through her interaction with staff and her focus on differentiation. The instructional team developed a needs assessment which led the group to reflect on future goals. They engaged in strategic planning by examining the data to effectively identify teacher outcomes that have a high impact on student learning. As a result, the staff established three priorities as a major focus for the year: social studies, conferring and word study/phonics. This focus has resulted in a high degree of consistency in where teachers place additional emphasis on their instruction and as a result, the quality of student learning is improving. Teachers regularly meet in school professional development sessions and grade conferences to discuss how well these strategies and the focus on instruction are working.

The principal also encourages and supports staff through regular classroom observations and provides focussed feedback to help them reflect on their pedagogy and become more aware of their instructional practices. New teachers are also well supported with a mentor and team teacher, who works with them side by side in their classrooms to model lessons and provide feedback on lessons observed. All teachers are provided with the opportunity to attend reading and writing staff development workshops. The teachers are offered a menu of choices and select the options that best align with their needs at the time. More experienced teachers are provided with advanced topic choices. Teachers feel empowered to demonstrate leadership in 'growing' the most effective strategies to meet the learning needs of their students because their choices are personalized. The school has established a variety of partnerships with outside organizations that enhance and enrich learning. For example, Carnegie Hall is providing an artist to work with the school's band leader for six months. The staff encourage students to become charitable members of the community through participation in charities such as Penny Harvest and Locks of Love. The school also provides effective support services for students who have specific needs, through speech and language services, the school psychologist and a guidance counsellor. Recently, a student experienced the loss of a parent and the school rallied behind this child to offer special support. This is a community that highly supports the development of the whole child.

**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 well developed.**

The principal has articulated a clear vision for the future development of the school and has engaged her staff in trying to create the best possible education for each child. Teachers readily engage in collaborative planning that is personal and tailored to meet the learning needs of students. The school has developed a highly effective system for analyzing and using data to set goals, plan instruction and monitor progress. Teachers

are adept at revising their practices based on the data in order to take immediate action to address gaps in learning. As a result of this strategic focus and a co-ordinated team approach, students make good progress. The school is highly effective in accelerating student learning and supporting high achievement in the core subjects. However, the principal also sees the potential for school growth in the recent data gathered from the central office's predictive assessments. Instructionally targeted assessments and practice tests are positioning this school for even greater improvement and success because teachers are able to measure progress in each of the core areas more accurately and establish skill profiles that demonstrate student mastery.

Each year the entire staff engages in a reviewing the school improvement plan and in professional dialogue about the school's performance data and the goals that drive instruction. Since the staff take responsibility seriously for moving the school forward, there is high degree of commitment and dedication to improving student learning. They are more than willing to do the work because they see that it makes a real difference

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Lefferts Park School</b>	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>				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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>				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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				X	

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>					X

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent do . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>					X

◇	<b>Outstanding</b>
+	<b>Well Developed</b>
✓	<b>Proficient</b>
➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>