



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Forest Elementary School

Elementary School 071

**62-85 Forest Avenue
Queens
NY 11385**

Principal: Walkydia Olivella

Dates of review: March 17-18, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Ken Bryan

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Forest Elementary School has an enrollment of 956 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises of 49% Hispanic, 45% White, 5% Asian and 1% Black students. The student body includes 19% English language learner and 14% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students and the girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 92.5%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 63% eligibility.

The school serves a very diverse population which includes over forty ethnic groups who speak more than twenty languages. A number of staff members are fluent in the languages spoken within the school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and the whole school community have a very clear vision for the future development of the school.
- The principal and her cabinet provide excellent instructional and operational leadership.
- The teachers work very collaboratively and collegially to make instruction interesting and motivating.
- Staff use data very effectively to track the progress of individual students, cohorts and subgroups.
- The school has developed very positive relationships with parents and caregivers.
- The students behave extremely well and they have developed excellent relationships with the teachers and with each other.
- The school presents very good professional development opportunities through the use of data and through classroom observations.
- The principal and her cabinet use the school's budget very effectively to provide resources, additional programs and professional development.
- English language learners and special education students make good progress as a result of timely interventions.
- The school's overall tone is one of purpose and calm, with procedures routinely followed to enable it to run very smoothly on a day-to-day basis.

What the school needs to improve

- Make more detailed comparisons of students' progress based on the school's past performance.
- Increase the levels of student attendance further.
- Develop differentiated instruction to focus upon increasing the pace and challenge for higher achieving students.
- Use data more effectively to demonstrate the school's progress towards its goals, in order to make strategic decisions to improve student outcomes.

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.

Forest Elementary is a very good school that provides a high-quality education for its students within a safe, nurturing and stimulating learning environment. The dynamic principal and her very effective cabinet lead the school well. The teachers work very collaboratively and collegially to plan instruction that is interesting and motivating for the students. In turn, the effective instructional design team supports staff very well. This includes coaches and administrators, who provide very effective differentiated professional development.

Staff use data very effectively across the school to create individual learning plans for all students. As a result, they monitor student progress and achievement very closely. The school's inquiry team is well established and it is effectively monitoring the progress of its target population. The school appreciates the need to use school-wide data more effectively to demonstrate how well it is doing and to review its progress towards its goals. Staff are working very hard to raise levels of student attendance and recognize they still need to do more. The school has made good progress since the last Quality Review by tackling differentiated instruction, raising student attendance, increasing parental participation and using data more effectively. The principal and her instructional team recognize the need to differentiate instruction further to better meet the needs of the highest achieving students.

The students and the teachers have developed especially positive relationships. The students behave impeccably and they receive very good academic and personal guidance. Parents and caregivers are fully encouraged to be part of the life of the school. There is a tangible sense of pride within the school, where all members of the learning community feel supported and valued. The whole school community has a very clear vision for the future development of the school.

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.

Forest Elementary School is a data-rich community, where rigorous processes have had an enormous impact in providing staff with a very good understanding of the

performance and progress of each student. Teachers use a variety of diagnostic, formative and summative data to supplement the formal New York State assessments. They use periodic assessments very effectively to analyze skill mastery. The teachers track meticulously individual student progress through running records, class summary sheets, portfolios and other devices. Very good systems follow rigorously the achievement and progress of special education students, who have individual education plans. Teachers also monitor carefully the progress of the school's target population of vulnerable students at the level two/level three grade boundaries. In addition, they track the relative progress of the English language learner population. As a result of the school's analysis of the data for these populations, along with the assignment of timely interventions and the setting of challenging goals, students make rapid progress. The school also vigorously checks the progress of its various subgroups based upon ethnicity and gender.

The principal and her cabinet compare the school's performance with that of similar schools systematically and frequently. The school checks its current performance against previous years' data to determine trends. However, it is unable to summarize its findings in a meaningful way. As a consequence, the school is unclear about its accomplishments and cannot track its progress towards its goals at regular intervals. Grade and departmental teams analyze each cohort's performance as it transfers through the school. The entire faculty and administration are developing their confidence and competence in the use of data. Collaborative meetings, professional development and teacher conferences have data at their core.

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.

All stakeholders participate in a collaborative process to set school-wide goals. The school leadership team reviews the Comprehensive Education Plan each month based upon the available data. School-wide conversations are based upon the school's "ADPA" process – analyze, diagnose, prescribe, analyze. This very systematic approach to the analysis of data and the assigning of goals means that modifications and amendments are made in a timely fashion, and within a clearly defined yearly cycle. Targets for improvement are both measurable and realistic, and include success criteria and time frames. Teachers set quantifiable goals carefully, and base them upon intrinsic school-wide data from the classrooms and from interim assessments. They share individual learning goals with students for their achievement and progress through one-to-one conferences. Students, teachers and parents draw up individual learning contracts together. This is a particularly effective feature. Staff quickly identify students at risk of failing and assign remediation interventions through grade and faculty meetings. For example, academic intervention teachers use the Wilson phonetic program to address deficiencies in reading. In addition, the use of other programs such as Headsprout, Foundations and Words Their Way have been equally successful.

All members of the school community focus upon improving the performance and progress of the students. Staff share high expectations with parents and caregivers. The school has an open-school policy whereby parents have access to all staff in order to receive and give information.

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 plans successfully a broad and balanced curriculum that includes the mandated core subjects and a variety of programs within and outside the school day. The use of scoring rubrics and formative and diagnostic assessments clearly lie at the heart of any teacher/student conversations about progress. This is an effective process as it drives instruction. The administration holds teachers very accountable to provide well-planned and engaging lessons that motivate the students. The instructional design team, consisting of administrators and coaches, meets weekly to assess the growth of teachers and to plan differentiated support. Most teachers make instruction interesting and motivating. As a result, the school’s overall tone and climate is safe and conducive to learning. However, despite some clear and effective professional development focusing upon differentiated instruction, teaching does not challenge sufficiently some high-achieving students, and the pace for these students is too slow.

The principal has been proactive and imaginative in the use of the school’s budget to meet the needs of target populations. All constituents within the learning community have built very positive relationships. There are high levels of mutual trust and support among the students, staff and parents. Excellent relationships promote the academic and personal development of the students and the professional development of the staff. The school’s strategies and processes for challenging student absence and lateness are robust and embedded. In addition, it celebrates good attendance through the use of prizes and certificates. The school has yet to meet its challenging and realistic goals for student attendance. It does not currently telephone home on the first day of absence, or use data walls to show patterns in attendance.

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, administrators, coaches and members of the inquiry team frequently observe every teacher and provide constructive feedback. Through the systematic use of classroom and formal data, they provide differentiated professional development opportunities. This is a significant strength of the school. The principal clearly understands the strengths and weaknesses of each member of the staff and she addresses key deficiencies through the careful use of in-house and externally-sourced professional development. Turnkey training takes place during grade and faculty conferences and common preparation periods. There are frequent opportunities for teachers to visit other classrooms on an open-door basis. This has resulted in greater consistency, as teachers are able to share best practices and resources. Increasingly, the teachers are becoming reflective and evaluative, and they work very collaboratively to plan, discuss the professional teaching standards and review classroom data. Teachers new to the profession feel very well supported and mentored.

Teachers are very proactive in providing students with academic and personal guidance and support. The guidance counselor and advisory staff support students very well. There are many opportunities for students to use their initiative and to demonstrate independence. The creation of a yearbook and the organization of school performances are good examples. However, the school does not yet have a student government, which would further enhance their personal development.

Excellent partnerships exist with other community-based organizations to enhance the personal and academic development of the students. Two very good examples are The Greater Ridgewood Youth Council, which helps with supervising homework and recreational activities, and Music and the Brain which provides consultants who work with the school's music teachers.

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 ensures that continual planning is an integral part of the school's self-review process. The Comprehensive Education Plan includes clear goals that are both measurable and realistic. The school leadership team meets monthly to review progress towards meeting student, cohort and instructional goals, and makes frequent adjustments based on available data. The instructional design and inquiry teams carefully revisit instructional goals to meet individual student needs. Teachers have been trained to be "kid-watchers" to use data from observations of students to inform and adjust instructional goals immediately. This is particularly effective. Grade and departmental teams meet weekly to evaluate school-wide data and measure the relative effectiveness of programs and initiatives. As a result, analyses of current formal and informal data results in prompt modifications and revisions to the school's goals.

The principal, supported by her administrative team, makes year-on-year comparisons with past performance and frequently evaluates the school's results in relation to similar schools. At present, the school is frequently unable to determine its progress towards its goals because it is unable to track the outcomes of assessments over time. This prevents it from making timely strategic decisions to improve student performance.

Teachers monitor individual student learning goals carefully. They evaluate the effectiveness of interventions that focus on student progress and have a clear understanding of the next stage of the goal-setting process. Departmental, grade and cohort goal-setting is part of a school-wide cycle, involving all stakeholders. The principal, her staff and the wider school community have a very clear understanding of the school's overall aims and vision.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Forest Elementary 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 demanding, 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?			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?				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