



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Louis Armstrong School

Middle School 227

**32 - 02 Junction Boulevard
Queens
NY 11369**

Principal: Renee David

Dates of review: March 24 - 26, 2008

Lead Reviewer: John Hudson

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well
What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review
Overall evaluation
How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Louis Armstrong School is a middle school with 1459 students from grade 5 through grade 8. The school population comprises 17% Black, 35% Hispanic, 31% White and 17% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 10% 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 94.7%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

A substantial school reconstruction program is nearing completion. The student body is divided into three houses, each with an assistant principal and guidance counselor.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a very good understanding of the performance of her school in relation to the performance of other middle schools.
- Collaborative teams develop rigorous and objectively measurable interim subject goals.
- Students enjoy stimulating and well planned and prepared lessons in a very broad range of subjects.
- The curriculum has exceptional breadth and offers a range of exciting possibilities for students to extend their horizons.
- An atmosphere of mutual trust and respect between staff and students pervades this positive, safe and highly inclusive school.
- Professional development decisions are very effective and made in full consultation between administration and teachers to achieve school and individuals goals.
- Teachers make very good use of opportunities available to them to visit other classrooms, evaluate their own performance and share effective practice.
- A range of highly effective partnerships with outside organizations including links with universities enables the school to enrich students' learning experiences.
- The school has developed robust procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of plans and practices and modifying them accordingly.
- The school community has a clear vision of continuous school improvement and has developed plans and time frames to ensure they achieve this goal.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve teachers' skills in analyzing data to inform their planning and instruction as well as track students' academic and personal progress.
- Continuously build capacity to effect improvement and change in order to meet demanding goals.

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.

A highly effective principal is leading her school through a continuous improvement process with the goal of accelerating student progress and raising student achievement. As a result, the school is making very good progress and achievement in math has improved substantially over the last three years, particularly at Level 4. In order to succeed in their joint endeavor, teachers are enhancing their skills in using data to track the progress of individual students and groups of students. School leaders and faculty have a good understanding of what each student knows and can do.

The principal has an excellent understanding of the performance of other middle schools, especially those that are performing particularly well and uses this to raise expectations further. Teachers work collaboratively and highly effectively to set demanding goals for student progress over time, with appropriate plans and time frames to achieve them. The curriculum is broad and engaging with many excellent opportunities for students to extend their learning. Levels of trust and respect throughout this positive, safe and highly inclusive school are exemplary. Professional development decisions are made in full consultation between administration and teachers to ensure school goals will be met and student progress continues to improve. Classroom inter-visitations are a well-established feature of the school and teachers make very good use of all opportunities available to them to evaluate their performance and share effective practice. Through links with Columbia University, Queens College, York College, Adelphi University, Saint John University and Hofstra University the school is able to further enrich students' learning experiences and support their academic and personal growth. School administrators make highly effective use of diagnostic data to modify school practices and procedures.

The school has made very good progress since the last Quality Review in improving its professional development program, which closely matches the goals of its current improvement plan. The school has made much greater use of data management systems to further improve teachers' access to the range of subject-specific and other data they need. The inquiry team has focused on a group of grade 6 students with low reading levels. The selection of this grade enables the team to follow the group's progress over three years. In order to accelerate students' progress, the team has investigated and identified methods to enhance reading levels. One consequence of the study is that libraries in all classrooms and grades have been significantly enlarged. This enables teachers to further improve the reading levels of all students.

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.

Leaders and teachers use a wealth of data from a variety of sources to gain a good and frequently updated understanding of what students know and can do and their progress over time. To do this they gather and analyze data, which includes attendance data, performing arts data and their own frequent achievement assessments as well as State test outcomes. The school tracks the performance of individual students and groups of students to ensure all are making at least satisfactory progress. Those students identified at Level 1 and 2 in English language arts and math and other groups of special interest to the school are monitored with particular attention. The principal takes great care to ensure the progress of classrooms, grades and subjects is uniformly high and that, over time, school achievement in all subjects continues to improve.

The principal has an excellent understanding of the performance of other middle schools, especially those that are performing particularly well. She is determined that her school will be among the highest performing schools in the City. Since the last review, the school has made much greater use of data management systems to further improve teachers' access to the range of subject-specific and other data they need. Ongoing professional development is giving teachers the skills needed to analyze this data to inform their planning and instruction and track students' progress.

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 and her staff have ambitious academic goals for end-of-year achievement. In order to achieve these goals, highly developed collaborative teams develop rigorous and objectively measurable interim subject goals to be met at regular stages through the year. They devise subject and grade level plans for students to achieve these goals, although these plans are also aligned by classroom teachers to the needs of individual students, including special education students, English language learners and any other group of interest to the school. Teachers routinely assess the effectiveness of these plans and the suitability of time frames to ensure all students achieve their interim goals.

Students work with teachers so they know their next learning steps and goals for improvement. In addition to providing parents with details of overall school goals, the school is working with much success to share individual student goals with parents. They do this to enable parents and students to understand fully their respective roles in ensuring student success. The administration has used a variety of approaches to attract parents to workshops and other events where assessment activities, goal setting, progress reports and record cards are explained. These approaches generally depend on parents seeing their children perform or attending events where their children's

achievements are celebrated. Through continuing discussions, teachers make good use of information from parents to gain a more complete picture of student understanding.

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.

Teachers work proactively with administrators to build a curriculum that is aligned to State standards, is relevant to the needs of learners and provides good opportunity for a very wide range of activities that impact on student learning. Coaches and teacher developers work with subject teams to create curriculum plans, phasing plans and assessment rubrics to enable the school to identify regular opportunities at specified dates when student progress can be objectively measured. Students regularly self-assess their performance and engage in frequent conferences with their teachers to ensure they are on target to achieve their interim and end of year goals.

The curriculum is broad and engaging, both within and outside the school day. Students enjoy stimulating and well-planned and prepared lessons in core subjects and an excellent range of other subjects, including art, music, dance, drama, band, orchestra, video production, technology, choir and physical education. After-school clubs include robotics. There are regular educational trips to the Gateway National Park, Jamaica Bay Wildlife, Pocono Environmental Center, Hall of Science, Museum of Natural History and Space Camp in Montreal. Physically challenged students participate in the Special Olympics, Very Special Arts Festival and Dance Festival. There is a trip to Europe each February and the school makes very good use of cultural development opportunities in the City. These include visits to hear the New York Philharmonic Orchestra and jazz at Lincoln Center.

The quality of instruction continues to improve as teachers further extend their range of assessment and analysis skills. The quality of care provided is extremely high. The learning environment is very positive, safe and inclusive. District 75 students are fully integrated into the school and levels of respect and trust across the school are very high. Students enjoy learning and achieving. The principal and her administration make good use of the resources available to the school to promote student achievement and meet whole school goals. Good attendance is important to the school and its students although student attendance has leveled over recent years at just fewer than 95%.

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 school recognizes the need to continuously increase its capacity to effect improvement and change in order to meet the demanding goals it has set for itself. The principal and her assistant principals regularly visit classrooms and use frequently updated information to gain a very good understanding of their school. Professional development decisions are made in full consultation between administration and

teachers to ensure school goals will be met and student progress continues to improve. The school has responded to recent changes in the math and science curriculum and the introduction of data management systems by building on teachers' skills so that all staff can take full advantage of these innovations. In addition, the needs of individual teachers are met through professional development, sharing of best practice, self and peer-evaluation and coaching.

Teacher collaboration is at a very high level. Teachers are extremely comfortable with classroom inter-visitations and make good use of all opportunities available to them to evaluate their performance and share effective practice. A recurrent theme is "How can we do this better; how can we improve student achievement?" The turnover of teachers is low but the school follows all State requirements to ensure new teachers are properly inducted into the school. A recently appointed teacher described the process to be extremely helpful. Procedures to enable the school to run smoothly are very effective. The school is a very calm learning environment where students want to progress and teachers and all other staff work very hard to help them. Students are proud of the wonderful displays of their work which adorn hallways throughout the school. Through links with local universities and colleges the school is able to further enrich students' learning experiences and support their academic and personal growth.

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 a very good understanding of her school and has created effective structures and procedures to ensure her colleagues are able to monitor each student's progress throughout the year. Teachers use this understanding of student achievement to adapt teaching plans and time frames so that challenging goals are met. Plans to improve teacher outcomes include professional development that is based on the school's need to meet its goals and individual teacher's skills and needs. This process works very effectively and the school responds rapidly to teacher professional development needs as they are identified. Teachers' abilities to improve student outcomes by fine tuning instructional plans to meet individual are effective and continue to improve as their own skills increase.

Currently, teachers are being trained to use the recently introduced Acuity data management system. This tool already enhances teachers' and administrators' ability to measure student progress, analyze achievement and fine-tune instruction, particularly in English language arts and math. The school anticipates that the system will be of ever increasing value as teachers' confidence in their use of this system improves and as it is developed to include a broader subject base. Currently all staff make good use of a very broad range of data to measure the effectiveness of plans and refine them to meet the needs of every learner. School administrators make effective use of diagnostic data to modify school practices and procedures. For example, the school identified a need to improve student reading and invested substantially in improving all classroom libraries. An investment in technology has resulted in a steady increase in the use of computers and SMART boards to improve instruction and learning. The school community has a clear vision of continuous school improvement and has developed clear action plans and time frames to ensure they achieve this ambitious but attainable goal.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Louis Armstrong 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