



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Francis Lewis High School

High School 430

**52- 20 Utopia Parkway
Queens
NY 11365**

Principal: Jeffrey Scherr

Dates of review: November 13 - 15, 2007

Lead Reviewer: George McLeman

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Francis Lewis is a high school with 4,576 students from 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 12% Black, 24% Hispanic, 16% White, and 48% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 12% 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 92%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

This high school is one of the largest in New York. It has increased its size significantly in the last three years; a large proportion are English language learners and a similar proportion are special education students. The school is overcrowded and classroom space is at a premium. The school operates a 12 period day beginning at 7.10am and finishing at 5.10pm.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The students are well motivated and attentive in class, and positive, cheerful and courteous in their behavior around the school.
- The principal and assistant principals continually convey and effectively promote academic achievement and personal development.
- Data on student progress is closely analyzed and used to identify underachievement, to allocate programs and classes and to accelerate learning.
- The extensive special education needs program contributes much to the progress and achievement of students across the school.
- Professional development is closely linked to need, delivered well and is effective in improving the quality of instruction, particularly for new teachers.
- The guidance counseling makes a strong contribution to the students' participation, self-confidence and academic progress.
- The school successfully promotes the progress of students who are English language learners.
- Close attention is given to improving and maintaining levels of attendance and participation, both of which are good.
- There is wide provision of engaging and challenging extra-curricular activities.
- Effective teamwork and open, honest discussion among administration, faculty and students are prominent features at this school.

What the school needs to improve

- Gain greater precision in goal setting, strategic decision-making and reviewing effectiveness.
- Intensify efforts to improve the achievements of Black male students.
- Extend the work in hand to improve the quality of teaching across the school through use of observational and student achievement data.
- Develop the understanding and skills of all teachers in the meeting individual needs in classrooms.

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.

This is a thriving and popular school. The very large size of the student population poses significant challenges to the administration, faculty and to the students themselves. The school buildings are about 200% over capacity and this makes programming of classes difficult. The school rises well to the challenges, however, and is a calm, pleasant and successful place for work and study. This is due in no small measure to the effective leadership of the principal and his administrative team. They successfully promote a culture of teamwork, reflection and concern for the individual, which is underpinned by high levels of respect between staff and students.

Using all available data, the administrative and faculty staff fully understand the needs and achievements of the students and assertively promote the progress and achievement of all. This has resulted in improving test scores, increasing rates of graduation, and in the reduction of gaps in the achievement of subgroups. The induction of new teachers is particularly effective. The recently established inquiry team is working rigorously and frankly on identifying and remedying underachievement. From data extracted from its progress report, the team has noted unusually low scores on the students' Global History paper this year. Comparative analyses with similar schools have provided some insights and the team is working well to pursue accurate diagnoses and effective remedies.

The school has tackled the issues identified in the last review. It has, for example, improved the technology for teaching and learning, provided professional development on differentiated instruction, developed assessment of learning in class, and is addressing the disparities in the quality of teaching across the school. While there is clear evidence to indicate progress in these points in the quality of teaching and in student progress, there has been no explicit planning and review of the impact of the measures taken. This relates to a lack of precision in interim goal setting, strategic planning and in subsequent review of impact and effectiveness. The school is well placed to take these next steps in its development.

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 school collates and uses a wide range of data to provide an objective understanding of the progress of students. The scores from state tests, the Regents diploma classes and graduation are the main source of data, but information from teachers' observation

reports is also used extensively. These are scrutinized by the principal, assistant principals and teachers to monitor achievement and to identify differences, patterns and weaknesses in performance. Administrative and faculty staff have a clear understanding of the progress and achievements of students across the school. This has contributed significantly to the school's improving academic record.

The school keeps a particularly close eye on the progress of subgroups of students. The identification and support of special education students is managed carefully. There are a relatively large number of students with individual education plans, over 500, and great care is taken with the specification of diagnosis and remediation. The data is used well to determine programs, resources and instruction. A feature of the work of this school is the sharing of responsibility for all students, and the school integrates special education students into mainstream classes as much as possible. English language learners are also making good progress, based on a detailed understanding of their needs and potential achievements. The progress of ethnic and gender groups is checked continuously. For some time, the school has been aware of the gap between Black male students and other groups, and it has been working on strategies for improvement. There has, as a result, been an increase in the class participation and pass rates of Black males, but a significant gap remains at the higher level of achievements in English language arts and math.

The school compares its data on student achievements with other similar schools. From the city's assigned group of schools with broadly similar intake of students, known as the "Peer Horizon Group", the school looks closely at the test and exam scores across subjects. In the inquiry team's deliberations, for example, it was noted that the school had a comparatively low score this year in Global History and this prompted detailed further investigation.

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 school leaders and faculty convey high expectations continually to the students and their parents. Goal-setting for individual students is clear and effective. Students and their parents are given frequent, regular and detailed reports on progress. Precise goals are set for special education students and English language learners. Appropriately challenging next steps are identified, often in numerical terms, and their implementation and fulfillment are tracked closely. This has led produced improved results, particularly in reading and writing. The guidance counseling service plays an important role here. In collaboration with the teachers, the counselors are assiduous in scrutinizing participation, progress and achievement rates to identify those students who may be struggling. From numerous individual conferences and discussions, agreed targets are set with accompanying strategies for their fulfillment. This contributes much to the school's improving state test scores and graduation rates. In its recognition of the disparities in achievement in ethnicity and gender, the school has set goals to close these gaps.

At overall school and subject department levels, the setting of goals is securely based on students' data. While they provide general direction, the goals, however, are occasionally worded too broadly and they are not easily translated into strategic measures to ensure improvement and to review progress.

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’s dual aims of promoting academic achievement and meeting individual needs are clearly reflected in its curriculum. Strong emphasis is given to the core subjects and the students’ performance in these is watched carefully to see whether additional help or alternative classes are needed. For example, each year additional summer schools are held to bring many students up to standard on their reading and writing before they enter high school. The instructional support service (special education) plays an important role in this regard. It manages the collation and analysis of data on all student performance to identify a wide range of needs. The information is then used effectively to program classes and instruction. In a school of this size, with a premium on space, this is a major achievement

There is a wide range of core and elective classes provided. This encompasses the arts, technology, science and physical education. The extra curricular activities include thirty sports clubs for which the school often has to borrow space and facilities. The students value the range and the support given in these activities and, as well as providing all round development, they consider it motivates them strongly in their academic studies.

Students concentrate well and are diligent in class. This is due in large part to the interest and motivation generated by the teachers. Classes are interesting and, in the main, engaging. The understanding and skills of teachers in differentiating instruction are developing well. Some very good examples of this are in evidence where the teacher uses various devices to assess the understanding of the students as they teach. In one lesson for example, as well as asking penetrating questions and noting responses, the teacher provided a range of option cards for students to show their answers to the class. In addition, hand held responders are used to indicate responses and these are recorded and used for further work. This is very good practice, but this level of differentiated instruction is not yet prevalent across the school.

Teachers are held accountable for the progress and achievements of their students. This is undertaken through analysis of data and by comparing the results of similar classes. The principal and assistant principal diligently pursue such differences and frankly discuss them with teachers. The resetting of goals often results. Led by the principal, there is a strong element of trust and respect between all administrative staff, faculty and students. This is a key feature in the development of teamwork and collaboration in the school.

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 encourages staff to take responsibility, reflect on their work and show initiative. They respond positively. Faculty staff participate in a wide range of professional development activities arranged frequently within subject departments and across the school, and occasionally externally. This has the result of developing a lively and thoughtful staff whose quality of instruction is improving. This is reflected in a more

lively engagement of the students in class, and some aspects of the work on differentiated instruction.

New members of staff are given special consideration for development. Recently appointed assistant principals, for example, have participated in training provided by the Leadership Institute and have gained in confidence from this. A large number of teachers new to the school and to the profession were appointed this year. They have carefully designed development programs that are matched to their needs. In addition they each have a “buddy” from the experienced staff who acts as a mentor and provides detailed feedback on performance. This excellent practice is valued by new teachers, who grow from the encouragement and support. All faculty staff participate in inter classroom visits and this helps in the dissemination of good practice.

The principal has invested considerable time lately in observing and reporting on the quality of instruction of teachers whose practice could be improved. This, combined with data from student achievement, provides a detailed picture of the instruction. Shortage of time does prevent such intensity of scrutiny to be spread wider currently, but the principal intends that the practice will be adopted by assistant principals for all 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 proficient

School goals are set by the administrative team and endorsed by the school leadership team. They are based firmly on student achievement data and are usually stated in the form of numerical targets. Periodic assessments, using interim test scores, take place at several marking periods during the year, and a close check is made of individuals or groups who have not reached the prescribed goals. As a result, programs may be altered and remedial action immediately effected. Goals for improved teaching are also adjusted in the light of observational and student achievement data.

Less consistently evident is the mid-year adjustment of departmental goals. While some teams, namely in science and English language learning, have detailed plans and actions for setting time frames and responsibilities, most other subject plans lack precision. As a result, strategic decisions are not always explicitly or fully stated. While the department goals are tied securely to the school’s goals, the school does not yet encourage assistant principals to establish and write strategies for which they are directly responsible. This means opportunities to hold leaders more accountable and to make reviews of the impact of interventions more rigorous, are sometimes missed. The principal and the cabinet have a clear vision for the future of the school, but this is not yet expressed in strategic and measurable terms. The school has the capacity and leadership to make this next step.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SCHOOL NAME: Francis Lewis High 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 make 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 | |