



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Hector Fontanez School**

**Elementary School 103**

**4125 Carpenter Avenue**

**Bronx**

**NY 10466**

**Principal: Alice Brown**

**Dates of review: January 30 - February 1, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Barry King**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Hector Fontanez is an elementary school with 1080 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 57% Black, 37% Hispanic, 2% White, 3% Asian and 1% American Indian/Alaskan students. The student body includes 17% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 91.5%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 73% eligibility.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal's extremely clear vision, consultative approach and highly effective procedures have led to significant improvement in the school.
- The staff work very well together to promote the achievement and personal development of the students.
- The school tracks the progress of students exceptionally well through the data it collects and analyzes.
- The support for teachers in the use of data is outstanding.
- The school monitors its work closely and makes excellent use of data in making strategic decisions.
- The building has a very positive learning environment in which students can enjoy their education and feel safe.
- The school's systems for identifying and supporting students who fall behind are exceptionally thorough.
- The school has a well-established goal-setting culture throughout.
- Teachers new to the profession benefit from extensive support.
- The scheduling and other aspects of the school's work are exceptionally well organized.

### What the school needs to improve

- Set longer-term measurable goals for achievement against which to measure rates of progress.
- Expand the range of after-school activities when resources allow, making fuller use of external partnerships in doing so.
- Make lesson objectives focus more precisely on learning outcomes to facilitate the differentiation of work and stretch all learners.

## Part 3: Main Findings

### **Progress made since the last review**

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

### **Overall Evaluation**

#### **This school is well developed.**

The leadership of the principal has been instrumental in transforming the effectiveness of the school. As one teacher said, "I came here some years ago when it was a caterpillar and now it's a butterfly." Through a highly collaborative approach and the careful targeting of resources, the school now has a good capacity to raise student achievement. It has developed an outstanding approach to the gathering and analysis of data and the support for teachers in using it is excellent. This has meant that the short-term learning goals for students are set with precision and instruction is well aligned to meet them. The good relationships throughout the school have helped to create a productive learning environment, where students much enjoy their education and feel safe. Their attendance is improving. The school has made many innovations to accelerate progress and it monitors student progress very carefully to ensure they are successful. The core curriculum is very well organized but the school provides a limited range of clubs after school. Staff members are increasingly skilled at using data to differentiate instruction, although students at times find the work too easy or too hard. This partly results form a lack of precision in the learning outcomes for lessons.

It has proved difficult to increase student achievement as quickly as their personal attitudes and behavior. A major reason is the very high proportion of students admitted late in their elementary school careers who lack basic skills in English. The school has implemented programs to deal with this problem, which are now having a favorable impact on outcomes.

The school has acted with determination to implement the recommendations of the previous Quality Review, and now has outstanding data systems, clear curriculum maps and a well-established workshop style of instruction. The inquiry team has made a good start, concentrating on lower achieving students in math. The school has developed a strong goal-setting culture and has thought carefully about the ways in which it can reach the demanding goal in its Department of Education Progress Report. The staff demonstrate a high level of professional commitment to meet this challenge.

## **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 outstanding.**

The use of data is at the heart of the school's drive to raise achievement. The school uses a wide range of periodic assessments to generate ongoing data about student progress, including Acuity, Developmental Reading Assessment, regular math quizzes and many others. The school analyzes and displays the data superbly well. It has created a "data wall" in each grade area that sets out student achievement in clear, graphical form by subject, grade, gender and ethnic group. The bar charts make particularly clear how student performance has changed over time. In classrooms, there are also data walls that the students helped to create making them accessible. The school has invested in a computerized commercial system that enables staff to see exceptionally clearly the progress of their students at each stage in their learning. All teachers have and are adept at maintaining a data binder with detailed evidence of their students' progress. The result of these impressive systems is that it is possible to keep an exceptionally close watch on the progress of all students. The school uses the same data sets for special education students and English language learners, but these groups also have assessment data from a variety of tests arising from the programs they follow, such as Achieve 3000. The school does its best to compare its performance with similar schools by examining the data from a number of them it has itself identified.

The school has recognized the need to "make data manageable" and has introduced exemplary procedures to support staff in its use. It has aligned training closely to the introduction of new systems so that, for example, all relevant staff are now online users of Acuity. Teachers have a monthly "data hour" with their supervisors that has greatly strengthened their competence and confidence in using data, as well as provided a collaborative opportunity to check the progress of individuals, set goals and plan interventions.

**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 is highly collaborative in reviewing student progress and setting goals. Staff have worked hard to establish a goal-setting culture throughout the school, which involves students. The process starts in kindergarten, where classroom walls have displays of goals. For example, a display has been made of a soccer field where the successful pursuit of a specific goal by a student is shown pictorially by a soccer ball getting closer to a goal. Students work with teachers to devise "child friendly" rubrics, displayed in classrooms, of the skills they need to reach higher levels in their work. The individual action plans for special education students contain precise, measurable goals.

The school has embraced fully the overarching goal set for its improvement in the recent Progress Report. Through extensive consultations, staff know the goal well. The

leadership of the school is well aware of the gains in student achievement that will be necessary to reach this goal but has not yet made explicit to all stakeholders what these are. It has very good arrangements for setting students' short-term learning goals. It has not established generally known longer-term achievement goals for individuals, classes, grades and the whole school against which to evaluate rates of progress.

The school has worked hard to promote greater involvement of parents in the work of the school and some of its initiatives have been very successful in attracting them. This puts the school in a stronger position to involve parents and support staff in achieving their children's goals. Parents feel that the school communicates well with them about their children, and that they know what they must do to improve their work.

**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 staff have worked well and collaboratively to develop a core educational program that has clear pacing calendars, curriculum maps and rubrics. The school firmly schedules assessment requirement so that periodic assessment continually provides information on student progress. The school runs a number of successful activities that enrich the curriculum, such as chess and robotics, but there is general agreement among staff, students and parents that the number and range of after-school activities is insufficient.

The principal's leadership style has created a high level of trust among teachers so that they work together very supportively to promote the achievement and personal development of the students. One student summarized their enthusiastic commitment to their work saying, "I want to come to the school every day." Teachers have worked hard to make their classrooms warm and productive learning environments, where students are interested and engaged in their work. The students' attention to and involvement in class activities is testimony to their success. The introduction of smart boards in grade 5 has been very successful in motivating the oldest students. The staff understand well the importance of using data to differentiate instruction and the school has many successful examples of it. At the heart of this is the well-established workshop model that allows differential instruction through group work and conferencing. Instruction is aligned well for special education students, English language learners and other students in need of specific support. Resources for student reading are carefully "leveled" to their achievement but staff do not yet consistently set differentiated tasks in general education classes for much of the work done. This means that on occasions the higher achievers find the work too easy while slower learners find it too hard. This results partly from the use of general teaching points that do not translate into precise learning outcomes for students at different levels of achievement.

The school is exceptionally well organized. There are clear schedules that stretch to the end of the academic year for the "data hours." The school has recruited teachers that are united in purpose and working styles, and funding is very well tailored to the school's priority to raise engagement and achievement. For example, the school took the decision to appoint team leaders for each grade from September 2007, which is proving to be immensely supportive to teachers. The procedures for improving attendance are very effective in doing so.

**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.**

One parent stated that the school had undergone "a 360 degree improvement under the principal." Stakeholders generally endorse this view. Her vision, leadership style and exceptional organizational ability have underpinned the significant improvement in how the school works. It now has a well-developed capacity to achieve its goals.

The administration has a good overview of the work of teachers through its program of well-recorded lesson observations, "data hour" discussions, and scrutiny of the results of periodic assessments. In the light of the findings, leaders make professional development decisions that align well to the needs of individual teachers and the school's strategic priorities. Examples of well-judged specific support are the training in the use of data and the use of smart boards for grade 5 teachers. Much professional development comes from the extensive opportunities that staff have to meet with each other in the twice-weekly common planning time. Good support also comes through the work of team leaders and the regularly scheduled meetings with the administration. Teachers new to the profession particularly appreciate the extent and quality of support. They are highly enthusiastic about the effectiveness of their mentoring, induction arrangements and training. A number of external agencies give good support to the school, such as the NYPD jazz band, but the extent of partnerships is limited.

Students enjoy school and feel they are safe from bullying. They believe that there is "always someone to turn to" if they are in difficulty. These feelings result from the excellent work by the school in guiding students, promoting considerate behavior and dealing constructively with transgressions.

**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 school vigilantly monitors the progress and development of students. It does this through its excellent systems for generating and analyzing data, and uses findings to make well-judged strategic decisions. When the data has shown that achievement is not improving fast enough, the school realigns instructional approaches. Examples include the creation of English as a second language classes for older admits with limited English, the introduction of smart boards in grade 5, the Wilson Reading program and Achieve 3000. Professional development supports such innovations, which the school carefully monitors for their effectiveness. The school adjusts the short-term learning goals of individual students and quickly realigns instruction where necessary. Students most at risk of falling behind receive different levels of support depending upon how well their achievement improves. The school monitors students either side of the Level 2/3 boundary, known as the "pushables" and "slippables", particularly closely. It rightly recognizes that the performance of these students is crucial to the meeting of the overall goal in the Progress Report. The school has not been explicit about longer-term

achievement goals and does not go through a reviewing and amending process for them.

The principal's vision for the school's development is well understood and acted upon by the school community. Her steely resolve to raise achievement and at the same time ensure that students grow as "rounded individuals" underpin all that the school does.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Hector Fontanez 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>