



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Lorraine Hansberry Academy**

**Elementary-Middle School 214**

**1970 West Farms Road**

**Bronx**

**NY 10460**

**Principal: Joy Daley**

**Dates of review: October 16 - 18, 2007**

**Lead Reviewer: Jill Bavin**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Lorraine Hansbury Academy is an elementary-middle school with 776 students from kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 33% Black and 65% Hispanic students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance is 92.4%, which is higher than the average attendance rate for other elementary–middle schools citywide. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 83% eligibility.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal provides strong leadership and is very ably supported by the new team of assistant principals.
- School leaders have successfully promoted a culture of high expectations.
- School leaders, faculty and staff know individual students very well.
- The administration know faculty and staff very well and consequently professional development is very good.
- Teachers are held highly accountable.
- The school is particularly successful in meeting the needs of special education students and English language learners.
- Very effective partnerships with various organizations successfully enrich the curriculum.
- Faculty are assigned very effectively to make best use of their strengths.
- Teachers plan routinely to differentiate instruction well.

### What the school needs to improve

- Further develop the analysis of the progress of different groups of students to include, for example, gender, ethnicity and newcomers to the school.
- Establish and formalize systematic and regular cycle of strategic planning, to include interim goals.
- Ensure that all plans and initiatives are consistently monitored and evaluated and the findings used to inform subsequent planning.
- Involve teachers in strategic planning at grade meetings to ensure they use data to identify what works well and what does not.
- Continue to seek ways to involve parents more in students' learning.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in dealing with the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is proficient.**

Students benefit from a good curriculum and well planned instruction at the Lorraine Hansberry Academy. They enjoy learning and love their principal. Young students listen closely as she greets them in the corridor to see if they will be “hon”, “sugar” or “poppy” today. Boys and girls of all ages seek and accept a quick hug as they go on their way. This principal takes no prisoners if either adults or students do not toe the line, but teachers explain, “She may bark but she don’t bite” and clearly respect her enormously. So do the students. The administration know their staff team very well and so provide a very effective program of professional development. This has resulted in good improvement in the quality of instruction since the last review. Students find lessons more interesting now because teachers are planning successfully to meet different needs within the class. The school has worked hard and successfully to change the culture of the middle school. Older students are now much more motivated and far more a part of the whole school culture of high expectations.

The school has successfully maintained its previous strengths in supporting special education students and English language learners. Data about the progress of these groups is closely analyzed so the school is clear about what works best for them. However, the school is yet to scrutinize data about other groups of students. While tracking individual student progress closely, the school is not collecting data about groups, and so not comparing progress, for example, according to gender or ethnicity. Similarly, it is not in a position to identify the impact of newcomers to the school on performance data, nor to formalize an understanding of the impact of the various initiatives and enrichment activities on student learning. The school has tackled some of its challenges highly strategically: most especially in selecting and developing high quality staff and assigning them according to their strengths. The school has a clear vision for improved achievement and has new systems this term to record and evaluate student and teacher goals. However, there is no clearly recorded system for setting interim goals and judging their effectiveness on the school’s work regularly throughout the year. The school has made good progress in using data to differentiate instruction and enhance student learning in lessons, especially in grades 7 and 8. The school recognizes it has not succeeded as it would have liked in extending parent involvement. The inquiry team is at an early stage of 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 proficient.**

The school keeps extensive and detailed records of each student's progress and identifies clear goals for improvement. Data folios are started in pre-kindergarten and information from parents contributes to early and on-going assessment. This semester school assessment will be every eight weeks and new systems will allow for even closer tracking of individual progress. A strong school focus, with professional development, has successfully helped teachers to take consistent account of students' existing skills to identify next learning steps.

The school has a strong commitment to inclusion. Close monitoring of special education students supports good rates of improvement and movement into general education classes. Similarly, a very close eye is kept on the progress of English language learners who do well in the school.

The principal is keeping a close check on what other schools are doing and has begun to forge helpful links with schools she has identified as "doing better", in order to take Lorraine Hansberry forward. The school has yet to deepen its understanding of its work by comparing student progress according to gender, ethnicity, and, for example, the length of time students have been in school and their participation in the various enrichment activities on offer.

**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 proficient.**

One of the school's key strengths is the detailed knowledge and understanding it has of each student's learning needs. Information about how well students are doing in each subject, in different classes and in different grades is comprehensive. This has helped to drive improvement for groups of students who have been under the recent spotlight as most in need of improvement. This has included those in Grade 6 about to enter middle school and also those students most "at risk" because of low achievement and significant barriers to learning in their personal lives. The level of collaboration and sharing of student goals varies in effectiveness. Although the goals for the whole year are shared effectively, time frames are not always equally clear, so there is not such a shared sense of urgency and rigor. New systems introduced this term allow for more frequent assessment and clear goal setting. Although it is too soon for them to have had an impact, they have put the school in a good position to drive student progress.

The school successfully promotes high expectations for the vast majority of students. This shows in the ambitions of the students, for example, when a grade 4 student announced in the principal's office that she wished to be the principal. The parent co-coordinator is very active in working with the principal to raise expectations for parents and families. This has included providing a more formal structure to their communication with the school. There has been some success in helping parents to have a greater understanding of the curriculum. Those parents who wish to be involved in their child's learning appreciate that the administration, faculty and staff are approachable and always prepared to enter into a two-way dialogue. Nevertheless, the school finds some families very hard to reach.

**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 administration has rightly, and successfully, focused on improving the students’ daily diet of instruction and curriculum activities. The principal has worked highly strategically to attract, select, nurture and assign teachers according to their strengths to the benefit of students. Interest levels have soared throughout the school, with the greatest improvement where it was most needed, in the middle school. Several strengths in this area include the good focus on promoting both academic and personal development, lessons that take account of differing interests and learning styles and regular opportunities for students to discuss their learning in small groups. The special classes for gifted and talented students place extra focus on independent enquiry and meet their needs well. The establishment of these classes in the younger grades provides a good foundation for improvement to their performance in later years. The “social and emotional” program for needy students is well structured and contributes to the school’s positive learning environment. Practical work, such as dissecting worms in science adds interest. Links between subjects, whether using computers for research, or Venn diagrams to make literature notes, have increased markedly the students’ engagement.

Students appreciate the wide range of enrichment activities, which include ballet auditions, residential trips locally and abroad and regular school performances. Activities are selected to pursue the whole school determination to broaden student horizons and do so successfully. There is a high degree of accountability for teachers to promote learning in a safe and stimulating environment. Because of staffing constraints not all programs are available to all students, but the school works hard to fulfill its commitment to a broad and balanced curriculum. Unsurprisingly, students enjoy school and attendance is good. Nevertheless, the school does not let up on the message that attendance and punctuality are important.

**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 administration knows their teachers extremely well. Their observations are perceptive, constructive and helping to drive school improvement. They provide a rich source of data that informs the very effective program of professional development. This is closely aligned to school priorities but also very well aligned to individual teacher’s needs, because, as the principal says, “one brush doesn’t paint all”. Teachers share planning time and discuss student progress at grade meetings; they are increasingly evaluating each other’s ideas in a growing environment of professional dialogue. Opportunities to see each other teach are used frequently to address a particular need as part of a professional development program. Teachers both new to the school and to the profession are very well supported through their mentors and a wide range of professional activities. The impact is evident in the positive contribution they are already making for their students.

The administration leads faculty and staff in a determined commitment to a strong moral code and the inclusion of all students wherever possible. Consequently, they ensure that

messages to students, about how much they are valued and how well they are expected to behave, are consistent. Students learn to anticipate the consequences of their actions, for good or bad, and this is a significant factor in the school being such an orderly community where students feel safe. Messages about high expectations are reinforced through an extensive range of partnerships with outside organizations that play their part in extending student experience; such as links with the Nassau program for science or with the National Dance Institute.

**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.**

The principal has been effective in bringing about an enhanced culture of learning in the school and has been instrumental in improving instruction and student interest over the last year, especially in the middle school. She has acted strategically to build her administrative team with the school's needs in mind. The team have a wide range of complementary skills and expertise but, being newly established this year, have had little time to get to grips with all their tasks. Nevertheless, the assistant principals have made a strong start to their new roles in contributing to meeting the school's priorities.

This is a school that knows individual students extremely well, and an administration that knows its faculty and staff extremely well. They have a shared vision firmly rooted in improved achievement, within a context of nurturing the whole child. Selected priorities for development are soundly based in the results of tracking student progress and over the last year have been successful in modifying instruction and curricula developments. Some plans are not fully documented, and interim goals with clear success indicators are not consistently identified. This means that the school is not always in a strong position to track the outcome of its efforts on different groups of students. Current systems do not readily encourage a smooth cycle of "planning", "doing" and "reviewing", so while the impact of different programs may be discussed in relation to individual students, administration and faculty are missing opportunities to deepen their understanding of the overall effectiveness of their actions. Therefore, they cannot be sure that they are evaluating accurately and rapidly and revising plans as efficiently as possible.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME:	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
Loraine Hansberry PS 214			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 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		
<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?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>				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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>				X	