



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

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



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Laboratory School of Finance and Technology**

**Middle School 223**

**360 East 145 Street  
Bronx  
NY 10454**

**Principal: Ramon Gonzalez**

**Dates of review: March 3 - 4, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Ronnie Solow**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Laboratory School of Finance and Technology is a middle school with 469 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 24% Black, 74% Hispanic, and 1% White. The student body includes 16% English language learners and 14.5% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 - 2007 was 91.5%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 87% eligibility.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal is a skilled educator, supervisor and manager who clearly articulates and shares his vision for the school.
- The energetic staff has coalesced into a collaborative, reflective community of learners.
- A sophisticated data analysis system drives the instructional program and results in improved student outcomes.
- The principal and cabinet set demanding and measurable goals, with interim timeframes, in order to improve academic results.
- High expectations are expressed through rubrics, standards, work samples, bulletin board displays and exit projects.
- A wide array of arts, music and technology classes provide opportunities for creativity and self-expression in support of the academic program.
- Professional development activities, differentiated according to skill level, need and experience, result in improved student achievement.
- Uniformity of curriculum, differentiated learning strategies, and flexible groupings provide engaging and challenging classroom activities.
- Character education supports the development of trust and respect, and enhances the social and emotional development of the students.
- The budget, staffing and scheduling decisions wisely support and enhance the academic goals, as evidenced by data outcomes.

### What the school needs to improve

- Develop a parent handbook, in English and Spanish, to share information and goals with students and their parents.
- Develop additional strategies to further minimize the differences in progress and performance between sub-groups in the school.
- Extend classroom accountability through individual goal setting conferences that focus on specific student needs.

## 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 dynamic principal, who empowers the young staff to be risk takers and encourage their students through engaging hands-on lessons, leads the Laboratory School of Finance and Technology. Located in a shared building, the school is richly decorated with photographs of classroom activities, samples of high quality student work and banners from the colleges attended by the staff. The character education program, supported by a token economy called school bucks, encourages and rewards students for doing well and supports the finance and technology theme of the school.

Professional development activities successfully focus on developing and expanding best practices among the relatively inexperienced staff. Mentors, coaches, “buddy” teachers and consultants provide intensive support for the teachers across subject areas. Over the past four years, the school has made consistently good progress in English language arts and math towards closing the achievement gap between sub-groups in the school, although there is still a way to go. Data is consistently gathered and analyzed in order to assess progress and performance outcomes for all groups in the school. Classroom lessons and activities actively engage students in meaningful, hands-on learning activities, well supported by the arts and technology.

The school effectively addressed the areas for improvement from the last Quality Review through increased student performance outcomes. The staff received training in data collection and analysis, along with application of the information using the Santa Cruz model for teaching. Professional development successfully employed classroom improvement through learning walks that focused on differentiation, academic rigor and student engagement. At this time, students are unable to explain the steps needed to reach their known individual learning goals. Specific programs effectively address the needs of higher achieving students and those who are overage with interrupted educational histories. The inquiry team is studying 30 special education students and English language learners through an action research project examining progress along the continuum of writing skills.

### **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 uses a variety of data including State exam results, diagnostic and predictive assessments and classroom informal sources to examine the performance outcomes for all students. The staff members consistently use data kept in organized assessment binders and high quality student portfolios. Classroom teachers are well aware of what their students know and use the data as a measure of class and individual progress in order to plan effectively. The school data specialist, a member of the inquiry team, provides excellent student performance data information, in user-friendly formats, for every staff member. The teachers' good skills of analysis enable them to formulate effective plans to meet the needs of their students.

Analysis of the data for sub-groups in the school targets the learning needs and performance of these students. The principal stresses the importance of the use of formal and informal data sources that assist the teachers to form appropriate, flexible instructional groupings based on objective measures of student performance. Assessments across classes, grades and subject areas are further analyzed and evaluated for progress by gender, ethnicity, English language learners and special education students. Trends are identified, and either applauded or addressed through reformulated teaching plans that effectively meet the needs of the students. Over the past four years, the school made consistent progress in closing the performance gaps that existed between groups of students at different levels of performance. The principal recognizes that additional development is needed to address the gaps in achievement and progress that currently exist and to move the school to even higher levels of performance.

The principal makes good comparisons with other schools in his network, peer horizon and district along with other dual language schools. The information gathered informs decision making about the teaching and learning process, attendance improvement and school culture. Excellent training in the gathering, analysis and use of data is intensive and ongoing. Training in the use of the California Santa Cruz standards cites good evidence to measure teachers' use of data to improve instructional outcomes.

**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.**

Teachers effectively plan for student improvement by using of data from many sources. The comprehensive education plan and the principal's goals and objectives are the foundation for the rigorous, well-designed academic program. Measurable targets, specified in the core curriculum areas, result in the development of excellent curriculum maps and pacing calendars. Student work samples, classroom tests and formal examination results serve as the basis for grouping decisions and for setting challenging instructional objectives. Self-evaluation by the students takes place three times per year and results in greater awareness of individual progress and needs for both students and teachers. Print-rich classrooms exhibit rubrics, student work and exit projects that effectively convey the high expectations the school has of its students.

Collaborative teams of teachers meet weekly across grades and subjects to reflect and plan for their students. English language learners, special education students, and students identified as being at risk of academic failure receive excellent interventions. Targeted, quality instruction, provided through in-school and extended-day programs,

academic intervention services in pullout or push-in models and in self-contained settings, address the needs of the identified students. Data analysis revealed a group of over-age students with interrupted educational backgrounds. A special class serving their particular needs allows the group to earn necessary academic skills and credits through an accelerated program, in order to move on to high school.

Parents regularly receive information regarding their children's progress and needs through a variety of formal and informal measures. Parents stated, "The principal and teachers keep us updated". "We have cell phone and e-mail contacts for the teachers". In addition to report cards, including predictive and interim testing results, parents receive mid-period reports of their children's progress. At this time, there is no parent handbook, in English and Spanish, to keep the parents informed about all areas of the school program and goals.

**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 core curriculum follows the State and City mandates. All classes, including science and social studies, effectively utilize the workshop model with flexible instructional groups and differentiated learning activities. The arts, technology and physical education classes are integral components of the instructional program and serve as great motivators for achievement in support of the academic program. Classes effectively support learning and needs using Understanding by Design components in learning styles and the differentiation of learning strategies and materials and result in improved learning outcomes.

Teachers held accountable for providing engaging, challenging lessons in a supportive, nurturing environment. The energetic staff are willing to assist students during non-teaching time in order to provide extra help or enrichment activities to raise student achievement. Teachers and students engage in collaborative, goal-setting conference sessions so that students can clearly articulate and explain their goals. However, at this time, conferencing has not yet resulted in student understanding the necessary steps needed to achieve the goals. Budget, staffing and hiring decisions, based on data analysis, target the classroom and instructional support in order to improve achievement. This close analysis astutely resulted in the creation of the program for the overage students, the accelerated math program for higher achieving students, consultant services in math, materials in English and Spanish and the purchase of ten Smart boards. An intensive grant writing focus resulted in the award for the artist in residence program and a new computer laboratory.

In support of the learning environment, all students wear the school uniform. Guidance personnel, grade leaders and support staff provide very effective services for all students. The character education program, school bucks, employs a unique token economy that ties into the school financial theme. Conflict resolution, mentoring, school band, robotics and athletic teams and clubs provide excellent additional support for the academic, social and emotional development of the students. Excellent procedures for monitoring lateness and attendance are in place. Attendance, currently at 92%, increased due to the institution of Art Fridays, historically the highest day of absenteeism.

**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.**

Established ranges of professional development activities serve the staff very well. The principal visits classes daily and provides good formal and informal feedback. Intervisitations between classes are supported and well planned in order to share best practices and model strategies. Demonstration lessons are integral components of the professional development program. The school serves as a model laboratory site for the Columbia University Teachers College Readers and Writers workshop in order to demonstrate to others the effective use of this model. The staff professional development survey indicates areas of need and interest and serves as the basis for the in-school training sessions. Information gathered at conferences, network and City opportunities are shared at weekly grade and subject meetings as well as faculty conferences. Consultant coaches provide good, targeted assistance and additional training in differentiating instruction, classroom management and using data effectively.

Very effective support structures are in place and result in improved academic outcomes. There is a school-based support team, special education and guidance staff, and English as second language teachers. After school and Saturday programs, develop participation in healthy life-style activities for students and parents. The South Bronx Cinema, Computers for Youth, Young Athletes, Inc. and the Mt. Sinai Hospital are some examples of activities that effectively support social, emotional and academic development.

**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.**

Measurable and regularly scheduled reviews of targets, benchmarks and timeframes, in all core curriculum areas, are included in the Comprehensive Education Plan and the principal's goals and objectives. Good systems are in place for monitoring and evaluating the progress of the school towards meeting the goals specified in these strategic plans. Review of school data is an ongoing process, serving as one strategic measure of progress and includes all members of the school community. The inquiry team, parents' association members and school leadership team meet regularly to scrutinize performance outcomes and plan necessary next steps. Grade and subject teams discuss progress and identify areas of strength and weakness from the performance data. Appropriate revisions to curriculum maps and pacing calendars are made. End-of-year, marking period or testing cycle data highlights areas for further goal setting and strategic planning for the coming year or cycle. The subsequent, well-developed action plan scaffolds on the successes and effectively addresses the revealed needs through targeted improvement planning. The principal and the school community have a clear and unified vision regarding future development of their school. Their action plan outlines the steps for continued academic and artistic success and high expectations for the students at the school. "We want our kids to be global citizens, self-motivated, empathetic and grounded in real world learning activities that inspire them to be life-long learners."

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Laboratory School of Finance and Technology</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>					<b>X</b>

<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>					<b>X</b>

◇	<b>Outstanding</b>
+	<b>Well Developed</b>
✓	<b>Proficient</b>
➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>