



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Luisa Dessus Cruz School

Middle School 302

**681 Kelly Street
Bronx
NY 10455**

Principal: Angel Rodriguez

Dates of review: October 16 - 18, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Bruce Berry

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Luisa Dessus Cruz is a middle school with 850 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 20% Black and 80% Hispanic students. The student body includes 20% English language learners and 18% 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 91%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 100% eligibility.

The school has a transient student population.

The school is housed in an old building and there are many building issues which remain unresolved. An example is that, after many years of requesting, air conditioning units have been installed in the auditorium. They cannot be used because there are no electric points to plug them into and the school has no indication as to when that situation will be rectified.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's excellent leadership and management provide the vision and momentum for raising student achievement.
- The assistant principals' and teachers' high expectations and good-quality differentiation of instruction are creating classroom environments where students enjoy learning.
- Many data sources are used very well to track student progress for all groups and subgroups in the school.
- Teachers make good use of periodic data to review the impact of curriculum and instruction in order to plan interventions for individual and groups of students.
- The academies offer an excellent range of curriculum opportunities and generate high-level engagement and interest for the students.
- High-quality professional development provides teachers with opportunities to share ideas and good practice.
- Excellent systems are in place to support students in greatest need of improvement.
- Clear procedures and a caring culture provide a safe and well ordered environment for learning.
- Parents have high praise for the quality of instruction, respect and care shown by staff to their children.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve consistency in setting measurable and challenging goals for student improvement across the curriculum.
- Improve planning to include interim goals in order to monitor and review progress in meeting whole school improvement goals.
- Continue to develop sophistication in the use of data systems and the monitoring of progress in order to target groups of higher achieving students, to improve their outcomes in State tests.

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.

Since the last review, the school has made good progress in improving its evaluation of professional development programs. It has enhanced the music and arts provision with activities which reach out to the wider community.

The principal's very good leadership is providing the vision for continuous improvement. The senior staff and teachers work well together in creating a safe and caring culture. The school has very good data systems, which provide high-quality information of student progress. Teachers plan differentiated instruction which provides high-level engagement and interest for the student. Students in greatest need of improvement make very good gains in achievement. Some higher achieving students do not make enough progress to achieve the higher levels in the State tests. Very good reward systems provide encouragement for students to work hard and behave well. Students describe the learning as challenging and enjoyable. The three academies provide exciting curriculum opportunities for students, which is enhanced by partnerships with community organizations and industry. Strategic planning is not providing the consistency in long-term and interim goal setting to give enough rigor to the monitoring of progress in achieving its targets. The inquiry team has already had several meetings and identified the students and the research activities it will undertake.

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 has very good data systems in place which is having a major impact on raising achievement. The principal and teachers use a variety of data sources well to track student progress for all groups in the school. Testing takes place before arrival and this provides an excellent diagnosis of the individual skill levels for each incoming student. Similar testing also takes place at each grade level to provide continuity as students move through the grades. One of the tests the school is using is Scantron, which is a computer adaptive test. Following good quality training, the teachers are now using laptops to test students, enter data and receive immediate high-quality feedback on levels of achievement in specified skill areas. Teachers use the data well to plan differentiated instruction and interventions for individual and groups of students.

There are very good programs in place for special education students and English language learners, who make extremely good progress. Special education students are given good support in small group instruction, after-school classes and resource room.

The 100 book challenge provides students with high-level interest books, in order to encourage them to read regularly. Bilingual and English second language classes provide good programs, which meet the educational needs of English language learners. Read 180 and the Wilson program are used well to accelerate student learning.

The school uses data well to track progress, plan differentiated instruction and interventions for different subgroups in the school. The school has been very successful in moving low achieving students to higher levels. They have significantly reduced the number of students achieving level one in the State tests in all grades. Higher achieving students make reasonable progress. There is not, as yet, enough sophistication in the use of data systems to monitor the progress of higher achieving students, on or near grade borderlines, to improve their outcomes in State tests. The school has made good progress year to year in moving some students to higher levels. Very good progress is made by low achievement students, special education students and English language learners. In comparison with similar school and other local schools with similar student populations, the school does well in closing the achievement gap for students.

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 use data well to set individual student goals and to plan differentiated instruction. Senior staff and teachers work collaboratively to develop plans and set improvement goals. There is not, as yet, consistency at subject level in setting goals for student improvement. Some subject goals are challenging and achievable. Other subject goals are unrealistic or too general. There is a strong focus across the school on raising the achievement of individual students. Marking period scores and outcomes from specific tests are used well to monitor the progress of individual students and to plan programs to improve achievement. The regular use of tests provides excellent data on specific skills for each student. The information is used creatively by teachers to plan differentiated instruction and activities for individual and groups of students. There are excellent support and intervention programs for students in greatest need of improvement. RAMP UP, read 180 and the Wilson program provide students with well planned instruction and support for their individual identified needs. Special education students, English language learners and other students at Level 1 and low Level 2 in the State tests make very good gains in achievement.

Parents have high praise for the work of the teachers and for the respect and care shown by staff to their children. Teachers, parents and students all share the vision for continuous improvement. High expectations are generated through celebrations of student work and achievements. High-quality displays of student work provide life and color to classrooms and corridors. The positive behaviour incentive system, rewards students for good academic and social behaviors.

There is very good communication between the school and parents. Regular newsletters provide good information about events on the calendar, as well as information about the curriculum and ways for parents to help their children. There are regular workshops for parents on a range of topics which include curriculum and parenting advice and guidance. Parents are provided with regular updates on the progress their children are making at school. They are encouraged to share information with the school on any issue which may affect their child’s academic or social well being.

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 excellent broad and varied curriculum is delivered through three vertical academies in the school. Each of the academies has a curriculum focus, which include law, communication and arts and science, mathematics and related technology. Students have an excellent range of elective subjects which include law, community service, art, music, finance and forensic science. Other activities and projects provide excellent enrichment, interest and fun for the students. The projects include park renovation to make them children friendly, preparing an art gallery display for public viewing and taking part in a robotics competition.

Teachers make very good use of periodic data from a wide variety of sources and it is used well to plan differentiated instruction. The instruction is providing high levels of interest and engagement for the students. Teachers use data well to plan programs of interventions for individual and groups of students. The budget, staffing and scheduling are used creatively and imaginatively to support curriculum and instruction. The school has reduced class sizes. It provides academic intervention services and after school programs to support student achievement. The school’s assessment coordinator provides good-quality information for teachers, which they use in helping them plan their instruction.

The principal, the assistant principals and teachers create a school and classroom culture which is safe, respectful and where students enjoy learning. Students with emotional and behavioral issues are provided with high-quality care by the support services in the school. There are very good procedures to encourage students to attend and be punctual every day. This has resulted in the school achieving high attendance levels. The principal, family workers and school aids meet regularly each week to monitor school attendance and punctuality. Automatic phone calls are made on the first day of absence. Home visits and parent conferences are held where attendance problems are identified. The school provides good incentives for students, with certificates awarded for 100% attendance.

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 and assistant principals undertake formal and informal classroom visits. They provide very good feedback for teachers. The assistant principals provide teachers with constructive written comments. They identify an aspect of the lesson which went well and give one suggestion for improvement. Very good professional development programs are in place to address the school’s development areas. Teachers do a self-assessment of their needs in respect of the school’s identified areas for development. Very good opportunities are provided for teachers to gain further skills and knowledge to improve their instruction. They are able to visit other teachers’ lessons and to observe model lessons given by senior staff and coaches. Teachers work very well in teams to plan curriculum and instruction. Common planning time provides good opportunities for teachers to share ideas and provide consistency in the differentiation of instruction and activities across the grade. The inquiry team is making extremely good progress in identifying student focus and in planning research activities. New teachers in the school receive excellent support

from a mentor, senior staff, teachers and coaches in the school. There are opportunities to work with other teachers and receive help and guidance from the coaches.

There are very effective systems in place to provide guidance and advice to students. Guidance counselors monitor academic and social progress of the students and provide an invaluable link between school and home. The Positive Behavior Intervention Support program encourages good behavior and conduct from students. The focus of the program is responsibility, respect and safety. It is also linked with the highly successful reward system which encourages mature behavior from the students. The school's clear procedures and caring culture provide a safe and well ordered environment for learning. The clinical director, who is based at the school, provides a valuable link between internal and external support agencies to help students and families. The school has very good partnerships, which are providing enrichment for students and professional development for teachers. They provide after-school programs of academic and recreational activities. Teachers can take part in high-quality training in how to use technology to improve instruction. The "principal for the day" scheme provides a good link between the school and industry.

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 Comprehensive Education Plan has appropriate plans, goals and timeframes for improving student achievement. Some of the subject plans contain challenging and measurable goals to improve student achievement, but there is inconsistency in other subjects. There is no evidence of interim goals for regularly monitoring and measuring progress in meeting the whole school improvement goals. The major areas of development appropriately focus on improvements in student outcomes in the State tests. The school has successfully and significantly reduced the number of students achieving Level 1. There has not been any significant increase in the number of students achieving Levels 3 and 4 in English language arts

Teachers make very good use of the outcomes of the analysis of periodic data to review student progress and to plan interventions. The teachers are provided with a range of analytical tools which provide very good information on the progress of each student in specific skill areas. They use the information well to review their plans and to adjust the curriculum and their differentiation of instruction. Senior staff and teachers undertake effective planning of curriculum and pacing calendars each year. Because of the lack of interim goals, with associated timeframes, there is inconsistency in the monitoring of the effectiveness of progress in meeting strategic plans and goals. The principal, staff, parents and students all share a common vision of continuing to improve the school and the achievements of all students. The whole school community has worked together to bring about the excellent improvements over the past few years. There is a real determination within the community to maintain the momentum for further improvement.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| SCHOOL NAME: Luisa Dessus Cruz Middle School (MS 302) | 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 | | |