



**Department of  
Education**

*Joel I. Klein, Chancellor*

**Quality Review Report  
Office of Accountability  
2008-2009**

# **Quality Review Report 2008-2009**

**Lyons Community School**

**Middle/High School 586**

**223 Graham Avenue**

**Brooklyn**

**NY 11206**

**Principal: Taeko Onishi**

**Dates of review: March 3 - 4, 2009**

**Lead Reviewer: Alison Sheehan**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Lyons Community School is a growing middle/high school with 340 students in grades 6 and 7 in the middle school and grades 9 and 10 in the high school. The school population comprises 41% Black, 56% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 14% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 89.0%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 74% eligibility.

### Overall Evaluation

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

This school embraces a continuous improvement model and fosters the growth of a life-long learning community. The school's goal, working in conjunction with New Visions, is to give students a strong liberal arts education and to expose them to new experiences. The school works tirelessly to achieve this through its educational program and through its urban workshop and field studies program.

The school has very good systems for the collection and analysis of data. The use of a database ensures that the school has a very clear view of the achievement of individual students, classes and grades. This system also effectively supports the progress of special education students, English language learners, boys and girls, and over-age students. A strong professional development component contributes to the very good standard of teaching throughout the school, although the use of different teaching styles and materials to promote differentiation and the use of data to differentiate instruction are not yet well enough developed to ensure all students make consistent progress.

Excellent staff and student relationships, linked to a strong system for guidance and support, create an environment where a high standard of teaching and learning takes place. The administrative structure of the school ensures that goals are set, monitored and reviewed for the school, classes and grades. While individual students have goals, these tend to be set for them rather than based on students' self-reflection of their own strengths and weaknesses.

The school is in its second year and it had a modified review last year. The outcome was that the school "exceeds expectations". The improvements since have been driven well by the principal and assistant principal, although differentiation in certain areas of teaching and learning are not well enough developed. The inquiry team meets weekly and has identified student engagement as its focus.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal and the faculty have a very strong vision for the continued development of the school, firmly based on an accurate and rigorous evaluation of the school's strengths and development needs.
- Students greatly appreciate the high level of support, both informally and formally, that they receive for their academic and personal growth.
- Teachers welcome the professional development that they receive, including opportunities for collaborative planning and support from the principal, the co-director, the coaches and external consultants.
- The principal is carefully and strategically directing resources to where they are most needed and to where they will have most impact for students.
- High expectations run throughout the building, to ensure that all students maximize the opportunities available to them, in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.
- Parents appreciate the openness and responsiveness of the school, the clarity of communication and the drive and commitment of the staff.
- The school has established a good framework for the collection and evaluation of student achievement data, which is driving its work.

### What the school needs to improve

- Continue to support teachers in collecting and reviewing data, and then using it to differentiate their instruction even more extensively and consistently.
- Build upon the good progress to date to develop further student ownership of assessment and goal setting.
- Continue to support teachers through collaborative meetings and professional development to strengthen their ability to deliver purposeful and engaging lessons.

## Part 3: Main Findings

### How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The school has established a good framework for the collection and evaluation of student achievement data, which is driving its work. The school collects a wide range of data and information for each student and is now making good use of it. The collaborative analysis and evaluation of the data ensures that teachers understand the data and its implications for the students at all levels, individual, class and whole grade. This enables the identification of trends and patterns, which are then used to drive instruction, curriculum modifications and professional development well. However, this analysis is not used consistently to differentiate learning to meet individual needs within a class.

Academic performance and progress are measured using a range of standardized and grade-wide assessments, scrutinizing student work, conferring notes, anecdotes, observations and attendance data. The school uses an online up-to-date progress report, Teacherease, which contains every assignment and grade for all subjects. Students and parents have their own access to this system and are able to track progress in all core subject areas. A common grading policy and rubrics, together with the collaborative review of student responses, help to ensure good consistency between teachers.

The school is open and responsive to the needs of the students, communication is good and the staff show drive and commitment. This is appreciated by parents, one of whom said "I have never had a group of people who were so willing to help me and my son before...and this is a public school". Students and families have access to and are able to reflect on the data the school organizes for them through Teacherease, quarterly report cards, conferences, meetings with advisors and letters from the principal. In addition, the school uses "My Action Plan" where each student has a "living" and growing document that charts their growth and goals and a plan for reaching those goals. Although the advisor is the primary contact person between the school and the student and family, throughout the school year families and students can address queries and concerns to any staff member via email. This allows for timely communication between students and family and the school.

**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 uses its data system to assist in the process of setting and monitoring school goals. It has an excellent organizational structure in place that ensures goals are set, monitored, and reviewed for subjects and grade levels. Individual student goals are set and monitored on a weekly basis with classroom teachers and advisors during the bi-weekly “kid” talk sessions that the teachers have. These goals ensure the continuing development of students. However, although at present they are involved in setting their own goals, students do not make a significant contribution to determining them. This has yet to be developed to the level where students consistently take full ownership for their learning.

The school is very effective in identifying and providing interventions that support students with the greatest needs. After these students are identified, often with the aid of the data, innovative scheduling is used in conjunction with targeted intervention strategies, which meets their needs well.

The school is very effective in conveying high expectations to parent and students. The school community has a goal of ensuring that students and families understand just how far they can go in life and what they can achieve. To this end, the school works hard to communicate with parents, putting particular effort into outreach work to make contact with parents. The school does a good job of informing parents about the goals that are set so that they are able to help their children make as much progress as possible. Parents and students alike say, “There is no reason for a child to fail here.” Parents say that the school has an open door policy and that if they voice a concern, the school responds right away.

**Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.**

**This area of the school’s work is proficient.**

The principal is carefully and strategically directing resources to where they are most needed and to where they have most impact for students, fully in line with the school’s plans and goals. For example, the school has hired personal support for classroom teachers with management, curricular planning and off-site teaching programs, and additional academic intervention support. Students appreciate the high level of support, both formal and informal, that they receive for their academic and personal development. The whole school community has a very clear drive that ensures that all students maximize the opportunities available to them, in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. Positive relationships underpin the school, with a strong collegiate atmosphere and positive attitudes towards students, even though some display many challenging behaviors. Positive actions are taken which ensure that students can come to school and have the space and support they need to be successful in the classroom.

The principal and content coaches have a clear understanding of differentiation and differentiated approaches to learning. Some staff members are integrating these into classroom practices, although use and knowledge of these approaches currently varies

between subject areas. The school is very effective in making staffing and scheduling decisions based on data. It is innovative in creating a schedule to meet the needs of students.

**Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

Professional development is extensive and is effectively focused on supporting teachers in achieving the school's goals and expectations. Each teacher's learning plan is based upon direct observation, student data and discussion with the principal. Teachers welcome the professional development that they receive, including opportunities for collaborative planning and support from the principal, the co-director, the coaches and external consultants. Teachers are fully aware of how their personal development aligns with the goals for the whole school and as a result are involved and motivated by the professional development process in the school.

Collaborative planning is effective and revolves around data and student work. Good opportunities are provided for teachers to visit each other's classrooms. Much attention has been paid to ensure that special education and English language learner teachers are fully involved in collaborative training with general education teachers. A mentor program for new teachers was introduced this year, and they receive much support and guidance from colleagues, as well as a weekly new teacher study group. Teachers work together systematically both formally and informally to reflect on the effectiveness of their instruction and are "continually in each other's classrooms" supporting and being supported.

The principal has started to engage students in providing a weekly newsletter to the students that addresses the connection between things that are impacting negatively on the school and the fundamental philosophical beliefs of the school. The students are seen as the most important part of the school. Extensive partnerships enhance this work further, as well as providing numerous opportunities to support enhance academic progress. The school is very well run on a day-to-day basis, with the whole school community acting to achieve what is expected of them.

This year's inquiry team is focused on student engagement. Teachers have used the findings from the inquiry team to support students failing to make expected progress. The research identified that lack of success was due to the poor work habits of some students who lacked opportunities to work independently, rather than any academic inability. This information is not influencing the nature of the support given and is being monitored to establish its effectiveness.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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 principal and the faculty have a very strong vision for the continued development of the school, firmly based on an accurate and rigorous evaluation of the school's strengths

and development needs. This vision is very well articulated through the school's overall goals and the more specific measurable goals that have been constructed. These have been developed collaboratively and shared with all parts of the school community. Plans and goals are firmly based upon an accurate and rigorous, data driven evaluation of the school's strengths and developmental needs. This includes thorough and honest evaluation of the impact of previous plans, as well as responding to new information and data as it is produced.

Timeframes and interim goals are an integral part of measuring and improving student performance and progress, as well as the quality and impact of instruction. Very effective collaborative planning, well supported by the principal and the coaches, enable teachers to make rapid adjustments to their teaching. Changes are made which meet specific learning needs identified through assessments. Once data-driven lessons have been taught, teachers are now routinely creating new assessments to test for progress and mastery, to drive further improvement.

## School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

<b>School name: Lyons Community School</b>	△	➤	✓	+
<b>Overall QR Score</b>				<b>X</b>
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.</b>				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>				
	△	➤	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?				<b>X</b>
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?				<b>X</b>
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?				<b>X</b>
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?				<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				<b>X</b>
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>				
	△	➤	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?				<b>X</b>
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?				<b>X</b>
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?				<b>X</b>
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?				<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>				<b>X</b>

### DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYQ, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

**Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.**

<i>To what extent do ...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?			X	
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?			X	
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?				X
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X	

**Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.**

<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?				X
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?				X
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?				X
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>				X

**Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

<i>To what extent do...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?				X
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?				X
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?				X
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?				X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>				X

<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed