

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2008-2009**

**Florence Nightingale School**

**Elementary School 110**

**285 Delancey Street  
New York  
NY 10002**

**Principal: Karen Feuer**

**Dates of review: February 25 - 26, 2009**

**Lead Reviewer: Daniella Phillips**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Florence Nightingale School is an elementary school with 478 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 14% Black, 55% Hispanic, 16% White, and 15% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 93.3%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

### Overall Evaluation

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

The principal, faculty, and parents are passionately committed to securing the best learning environment for their children and to identifying aspects of the school's work that warrant improvement. With a no-nonsense approach, the new principal has helped focus this school, well known for high student achievement, on recent trend data showing flat student progress. She has built broad consensus among key stakeholders around the need for close monitoring of academic outcomes.

Since last year's review, the school has made great strides in understanding and solving complex problems by using data wisely. All teachers engage effectively in the collection and analysis of student data to drive instructional planning. Moreover, well-developed class assessment approaches align strongly with curriculum standards and across grades. This consistency has elevated teaching practice to the point where differentiated lessons that match students' needs are the norm, with slight variation in quality. Students appear highly engaged in almost all lessons, as they benefit from a project-based and integrated approach to learning across content areas. The arts, science and technology lessons especially motivate students with diverse learning styles.

The school sets very high expectations for both students and staff to achieve their full potential. Teachers develop short- and long-term learning goals for each student in literacy, math, and science with sensible action plans. However, other content areas lack equivalent detailed development. Parents support school initiatives, such as the recent effort to provide families with specific academic strategies for their child. They engage willingly in school matters, but express the desire for more individualized updates on student learning.

A key priority this year has been to optimize the effectiveness of the co-teaching model. Strong professional development in this area has led to struggling learners making substantial gains, especially special education students. The school carefully monitors instructional practices for all learners, as more frequent classroom observations and tailored professional development raises overall consistency. Teachers reflect thoughtfully on their practice, and seek additional opportunities for collaborative inquiry and shared decision-making. This school community has developed the right momentum to ensure an upward trend for all students' learning.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The new principal is focusing the school community to address sensibly and urgently the need for increased academic progress by all students.
- Teachers strongly differentiate their instruction and use groupings, centers, and tailor next steps to match students' achievement levels.
- The school maximizes effective external partnerships and systems in-house to motivate students to improve attendance and meet raised behavioral expectations.
- Students benefit from a broad and engaging curriculum that highlights experiential learning through the arts and sciences.
- Staff members share a passionate commitment to student learning and have a well-developed understanding of the role data plays in instructional planning and school improvement.
- With supportive professional development, special education and general education co-teachers raise the bar in meeting students' diverse learning needs.
- The supervision of struggling students through the pupil-personnel team process has improved significantly with regular monitoring of action plans.

### What the school needs to improve

- Develop more regular and specific two-way communications with families about what students are studying and how they are progressing, building on the already strong parental involvement.
- Deepen goal-setting practices in all core subjects with clear targets so that teachers, parents, and students fully understand the next steps towards higher achievement.
- Develop further opportunities for teacher leadership and shared decision making to promote greater trust with administration.

## 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 effectively gathers and organizes data from a variety of sources in order to gain a deep understanding of students' academic achievement. Teachers maintain data binders with updated attendance, report card grades, multiple periodic assessments, and a broad range of student writing and other work samples from core content areas. The strength of this consistent practice is that teachers use the information in actionable and sensible ways, rather than compiling binders merely as repositories of data. For instance, teachers establish guided reading and other small groups in their daily lessons to work on targeted skills. Similarly, teachers use predictive assessment data to form small groups for test preparation. Mindful of the time consumed by testing, school leaders and staff evaluate critically each assessment tool to determine the value gained by the data. As a result, the school has in place well-developed class assessment approaches that align strongly with curriculum standards and across grades.

At the whole-school level, administrators know in good detail the trends of student performance on traditional standardized tests and they accurately identify underperforming subgroups to track closely. This year, for example, heightened monitoring of special education and higher-achieving students ensures that they receive challenge at their level. At weekly meetings of the pupil personnel team, teachers and school leaders review data of struggling learners to gauge progress and they formalize next-step actions for follow up. The inquiry team follows the same process for two groups of students, one high, and one low performing. Teachers and coaches work together very effectively to produce "at-a-glance" snapshots of student learning at the whole group, small group, and individual student level.

The school does a good job of communicating information about student learning with parents and the students themselves. Families are keenly aware of their child's reading level, math learning, class projects, and academic priorities of the school. The monthly parent newsletter and workshops provide sufficient curricular connections, while teachers regularly use telephone, e-mail, meetings, and publishing parties to communicate informally about individual student progress. Whereas teachers and school leaders maintain an organized learning profile of each student, parents do not yet have equivalent robust tools, such as electronic grade books or interim progress reports, to know what their child is achieving and working on. Nor do families have enough formal opportunities to discuss student learning or convey information from home about a child's habits, routines, and needs.

**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.**

The school maintains very high expectations for school and student improvement. The new principal articulates a powerful vision for looking critically and collaboratively at all school practices. Even a minor example like reorganizing lunch and recess schedules has produced better daily operation and reduction of student conflicts. The development of the Comprehensive Educational Plan involves key stakeholders thoroughly in the review of internal data and the design of strategic goals. Parents, staff, and school leaders articulate with good specificity this year’s school goals and the student achievement data that justify these areas as priorities.

The school pays great attention to recommendations from the last year’s Quality Review and staff members act determinedly to make goal setting logical, cyclical, and understandable. Within the past month, the school has begun to provide families with written learning goals in literacy and math, and detailed strategies to practice different skills. This is a good early step in extending communication with parents, as several parents describe the initiative as “very user friendly”. The letters home offer simple next steps for parents to assist children in meeting their learning goals. Thus far, however, the helpful tips are limited to reading and math.

Teachers consistently set short- and long-term learning goals for each student in literacy, math, and science with action plans, although other content areas lack equivalent detailed development. Grade level meetings and work with coaches ensure that the learning goals align sufficiently to specific curricular elements and not just general skills and habits. Conferencing occurs regularly in classes, so that students discuss with a teacher their progress in reaching learning goals and setting new targets.

**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 well developed.**

The Teachers College balanced literacy approach and Everyday Mathematics program comprise the school’s core curricula. Additionally, several cluster-teaching positions in science, music, and technology forge links with core subjects and enhance students’ multi-sensory learning. The study of science is particularly hands-on beginning in early grades, so students develop sophisticated skills of inquiry, observation and experimental design culminating in the annual science fair. Enthusiastic teachers utilize assessment data wisely to group students by need, re-teach content in different ways, and gauge students’ readiness for higher challenges. Differentiated lessons, especially in team teaching classes, include modifications of materials and assignments to address different learning needs. Across all classes, there is good evidence that teachers have planned units of study with attention to assessments at intervals, leveling of materials, and extension activities to suit students’ different learning needs.

Parents appreciate the school’s excellent reputation, intimate setting, and varied partnerships that enrich children’s learning experiences. The school embraces its work with specialized arts groups, such as TADA!, Rosie’s Kids, and an outstanding

architecture program from Henry Street Abron's Arts Center. Trained reading volunteers from a number of local universities and organizations contribute effectively during reading workshop instruction. School leaders think broadly about enrichment for all students. For example, a chess master teaches the game and strategy to every child in ten-week cycles. Students cite special trips and arts activities as "really interesting" and strong motivations for daily attendance. To date, the school's attendance is higher than the prior year at 94.8% in 2009, compared with 93.5% in 2008.

There is a strong culture of professionalism and respect among students, staff, and families. Parents identify the close-knit and caring community as one of the school's strengths, while teachers express varying opinions about trust and collegiality within the school. Teachers universally describe the school as headed in a positive direction, but some staff members seek greater opportunities for openness and involvement in decision-making.

**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.**

The administration carefully implements efforts to support the professional growth of teachers and resulting in consistently strong instruction throughout the school. At the beginning of the year, every teacher met privately with the new principal to map out priorities for improved practice. They valued these conversations, which then developed into personalized professional development plans. Teachers completed a mid-year survey, which revised professional development offerings, noting, for example, the need for more vertical alignment within each subject area. On a daily basis, school leaders make frequent classroom visits and follow up with constructive conversations and written feedback to reinforce instructional expectations. The administrators' strong presence in classrooms has met some resistance to change, but it lends validity and perspective to their instructional initiatives.

This year the school has invested considerable resources to optimize the effectiveness of the team teaching model, as most special education students in the school learn in this structure. This supportive professional development has paid off handsomely in gains made by struggling learners. For example, in the recent State English language arts exam, 50% of special education students met or exceeded standards in 2009 compared with 40% in 2008. Teachers note improvements also in class participation due to the focused attention students receive from two teachers involved in the lesson. In a school with diverse learners, from gifted and talented classes to special education classes and the range within, this focus on maximizing teaching time has raised the bar across all classrooms on accelerating student achievement outcomes.

The school's inquiry team models well a data-rich and team approach to improved student learning for a small sample of children. However, their experience has not been widely known or central to the daily work of all teachers. School leaders and teachers acknowledge the need for greater collaborative inquiry and expanded teacher leadership opportunities.

**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.**

At all levels, the school promotes reflection, self-evaluation, and adjustment of plans to secure gains in student learning. Formal written documents, such as the Comprehensive Educational Plan, school newsletters, and the Quality Review self-evaluation report, portray accurately the school's instructional strengths and challenges. While there is good precision to the monitoring of student progress in literacy, math, and science, this does not receive the same level of attention and detail in other core subjects. Some staff members note a slightly hypercritical lens from school leaders, but the greater sentiment is that sensible school improvement requires an honest internal lens. The principal describes thoughtfully steps that the school has taken toward its overarching goals, whether it has met the benchmarks set, and problems encountered along the way. She admits mistakes and seeks broad input in adjusting plans.

Two good examples this year of how the school excels in monitoring student progress are the revamped extended-day program and the streamlined process of the pupil personnel team. A year ago, the school selected students who attended the extended-day program early in the year and the target group remained unchanged. This year, teachers collaborate at grade-level meetings to select students for the added remediation or enrichment. They write entry letters that describe the intended outcomes and exit letters that highlight the progress made to justify the end of extra services. These monitoring structures ensure a productive use of the extended time and many more children participate in this year's extended day program as a result. Similarly, this year's tracking of at-risk students involves greater accountability than in years past. The pupil personnel team meets weekly and has instituted a shared student tracking system with specific case management to ensure adequate follow up for each student.

There is widespread confidence in the leadership team's clear vision for the future and its capacity to develop action plans that guide the school's growth. Parents and staff value regular communication and they support many recent data-infused decisions due to increased transparency. School leaders engage constructively in monitoring and evaluation of teachers' instructional practice. One teacher commented that "demands are greater, but expectations seem clearer" and the roadmap for the school's development "makes sense".

# School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

<b>School name: Florence Nightingale 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.**

To what extent do ...	△	➤	✓	+
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>				<b>X</b>

**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.**

To what extent do school leaders...	△	➤	✓	+
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>				<b>X</b>

**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.**

To what extent do ...	△	➤	✓	+
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>				<b>X</b>

Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed