

# Quality Review Report 2008-2009

**Louis F. Simeone**

**Elementary School 007**

**80-55 Cornish Avenue  
Queens  
NY 11373**

**Principal: Sara Delia Tucci**

**Dates of review: December 3 – 4, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Catherine M. Powis**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

PS7 is an elementary school with students from kindergarten through grade 3. The school population comprises 1% Black, 44% Hispanic, 6% White, and 48% Asian students. The student body includes 50% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 96.1%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 66% eligibility.

### Overall Evaluation

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

The Louis F. Simeone Elementary School is a vibrant, safe, and well-run environment that supports the academic and personal growth of children in their early stages of development. The principal provides clear leadership and vision, which have led to continuous improvements since she took her post. She and her skilled assistant principals have established a supportive school culture where staff increasingly work together to share ideas on the curriculum and information about individual students. Initiatives relating to increasing the performance of English language learners have been particularly effective, resulting in continued success in meeting State requirements for adequate progress.

Data is used very effectively to monitor the performance and progress of individuals and classes, particularly within English language arts and math, where there has been significant progress in grade 3. This process is not yet a regular feature within science and social studies so higher achieving students are not always fully challenged. The administration is committed to ensuring that consistency in instructional practice is embedded across the school to benefit the progress of all students. Several professional development opportunities are available to teachers to improve their instructional skills and knowledge. Further differentiation of this program to support senior as well as new teachers is a key area for development.

Teachers no longer feel isolated. Organizational structures are in place that lend support and encourage congruence among staff. Inquiry teams have been launched in each grade level this year. Teachers on these teams are empowered to work together to become more creative and self reflective in evaluating their instructional practices and take more responsibility for student outcomes. However, the culture is not yet one in which teachers are fully leaders and decision makers in building systems and developing conditions to best accelerate students' learning.

The school presents a good climate for high expectations for these young learners. All staff share a mutual respect for the wide range of cultures represented by students. Parents greatly appreciate the high level of communication with the school and the various opportunities that the staff offer. They feel very involved in the learning targets their children have. Their only wish for change is that "the school goes to the 5th grade!"

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal and her two assistant principals are highly effective in using a wide range of data to develop the Comprehensive Educational Plan, and to inform and measure the effectiveness of organizational and instructional decisions.
- Teachers are increasingly effective in analyzing a wide range of data to understand progress and set appropriate goals for students, and engage them in self-assessment, particularly within English language arts and math.
- The work of the inquiry teams is successful in encouraging teachers to become reflective in their data-driven practice and address very specific student needs to accelerate progress.
- There is a strong partnership with the home, and school leaders and teachers communicate high expectations to parents and provide them with opportunities to help their children achieve their goals.
- Organizational structures are very effective in providing teachers with opportunities to review curriculum, reflect on best practices, and evaluate the progress of their students around common grade and school-wide goals.
- The school is very effective in meeting the specific needs of a large subgroup of English language learners by providing rigorous instructional practices through Dual Language classes and push-in specialist support.

### What the school needs to improve

- Further develop assessment and monitoring in science and social studies, so that rigorous processes, including detailed rubrics matched to units of study, are put into place that match those in English language arts and math.
- Ensure that the school's professional development program is sufficiently differentiated, individualized and goal oriented to meet the specific needs of experienced teachers as well as those of new staff.
- Develop a culture of distributed leadership and strong communication and collaboration to ensure that the responsibility for new initiatives is delegated to a wide range of staff.
- Assist all classroom teachers in increasing the challenge for higher achievers through targeted professional development and inquiry work.

## 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 proficient.**

The school has good systems in place for monitoring student achievement and progress in reading, writing, and math. The administration makes a comprehensive analysis of its data to build a detailed profile of the performance and progress of subgroups, especially special education and English language learners. This complete picture identifies those students who require targeted instruction to move from Level 2 to 3, which is a school-wide focus. Tracking spreadsheets are translated into color-coded pie graphs and used by academic intervention specialists to determine next learning steps. This year the work of inquiry teams on each grade represents best practices as several teachers engage in analyzing data sources from low achieving students to determine where gaps in learning are taking place.

Teachers are supported by professional development in the use of the various forms of data analysis to improve instruction and set goals. At the classroom level all teachers collect, and most teachers analyze and effectively monitor, a variety of data. Grade-specific periodic and long-term assessments, conference notes and student work measured against specific rubrics provide a picture of what each child knows and is able to do in reading, writing, listening and speaking, and in math. This information is used to inform curricular decisions, and is shared with parents on a regular basis through meetings and written communication translated into multiple languages. This thorough process is also developing in social studies and science where teachers are using general checklists matched to units of study to collect data, and are formulating ways to share progress in these subjects more regularly with parents.

Special education teachers regularly monitor students' achievement and track their progress against the goals in their individual education plans. English language learners are very well supported by specialist teachers, who work closely with class teachers to analyze learning outcomes. As a result, achievement levels are increasing in grade 3, as demonstrated by students making adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years on State tests.

**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.**

School leaders and faculty set measurable goals that are driven by standards-based curriculum maps and data analysis. These goals are detailed and challenging and form the basis of the Comprehensive Educational Plan. The plan, written collaboratively by members of the school leadership team, is rigorously developed around identified gaps

in student achievement. The principal's annual goals and objectives are aligned with this plan and are shared with all faculty. There are also short- and long-term action plans for the improvement of all students' achievement, based on these grade- and school-wide goals.

This year the school has launched an initiative for students to write personal goals for each unit of study in all the core subjects, physical education and the arts. Following a conference with their teacher, students record each goal they choose on color-coded index cards, and place them in a card pocket on display. Although this strategy presents students with opportunities for self-reflection on learning needs and academic interests, the goals very often are general and not specific enough to target learning effectively. For example one 3rd grader's goal in social studies is "to learn more about China". Some students can articulate their goals in each subject while others have not yet come to internalize their personal goals and understand them. Some teachers are further along than others, both in helping students set well-focused goals and in developing more rigorous content goals for all students, with extra challenge for high achievers.

In English language arts and math teachers set data-driven goals for each student based on grade and school goals. The progression of each consecutive learning target for individuals is based on regular conferencing in all grades and, additionally in grade 3, outcomes from ten periodic assessments.. Classroom teachers collaborate with push-in specialists to identify smaller, specific and manageable goals for English language learner and special education students. A specific collaboration resulted in an English language learner specialist focusing on writing, particularly sentence structure and adding details, as an interim goal.

Parents are very enthusiastic about the positive changes that the principal has made in the school. They are committed to the high expectations for their children that the school communicates through regular meetings and workshops. Letters sent home periodically outline unit of study goals for literacy and math and suggest ways that parents can help their children to succeed. They especially noted the support of the parent coordinator and opportunities to participate in programs such as "Mommy and Me" that allow them and their pre-school sibling to join their children in their classrooms.

**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.**

As a result of establishing effective formative assessment systems the school has many classrooms where teachers model best instructional practices that challenge and engage students. In these classrooms teachers make good use of rubrics to provide clear and accurate feedback to students on what they do well and where they need to improve. Good use of these assessments also leads to purposeful grouping of students so that the degree of challenge is matched to their skill level. In self contained special education and collaborative team teaching classes, learning styles are taken into account when planning lessons. In one class different learning modalities were effectively addressed by comparing and contrasting two similar stories on chart paper using a graphic organizer, on a smart board where children compared story pictures, and then in groups at their tables during a writing assignment.

Teachers use strategy lessons, conferencing and some group assignments to individualize the learning that takes place in the classroom. During instruction students collaborate with each other, engaging in academic discussion. Lively conversations take place on the carpet when students turn and talk to their partners. Table discussions provide time for students to learn concepts. As a prewriting activity in one social studies classroom students were constructing a web of vocabulary and phrases that described an urban community.

However, not all teachers are equally skilled in providing engaging, challenging and effective instruction. In social studies and science, lessons are not sufficiently designed to promote higher order critical thinking and problem solving skills. Although content area knowledge is strong teachers often engage in a low level of questioning that does not develop these inquiry skills. High achievers are supported through activities offered during enrichment periods. This is an additional period in their weekly program, however, so does not help provide a more challenging learning environment during regular class time in reading, writing, math, and other core subjects.

The principal is highly strategic in organizing the school to provide programs and resources to continuously improve learning outcomes. In addition to teacher specialist support for English language learners in kindergarten, a dual language program has been successfully launched this year with a strong focus on developing these students' literacy skills in both Spanish and English. The same is true of the bilingual program in the school. The "early bird" English as a second language program is provided to 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade students before and after the school day. There is also an increasing use of technology such smart boards and computer assisted literacy programs such as Headsprout.

**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 proficient.**

Members of the inquiry team have been successful in gaining insight into new ways that data can be used to improve learning outcomes and inform practice. Their work has taken the school's understanding of data to the next level through a willingness to raise important questions as well as to analyze new data sources in depth. All participants look critically at a wide range of assessments to choose interventions and evaluate them honestly in order to diagnose what is getting in the way of learning. Participants stretch their thinking at weekly meetings and devise strategies that effectively engage those students most at risk, when practiced methods have not worked.

More teachers are involved in this action research as a result of expanding Inquiry teams to each grade. Teachers are becoming more reflective on how students learn. They realize the need to spiral specific strategies in the curriculum vertically from kindergarten to grade 3. When asked what influence the teams would have on the school five years from now, one member responded, "groups of teachers will be doing inquiry work across the school as a regular way of finding what children need to become successful". Inquiry work has yet to be expanded to include higher achievers and to complement the new enrichment model. The school provides professional developmental opportunities in addition to action research. These provide support for new members of staff but do not always take into account the individual needs of more experienced teachers.

The school is a committed and supportive learning environment that has successfully developed strong partnerships with outside organizations. These add valuable extra dimensions to the students' experiences. The Queens Child Guidance Clinic provides free guidance services to participating students. Community workers, such as, firefighters and policemen and women participate in special assemblies as part of a social studies unit of study. Residencies promoting the arts as well as academic areas are well established. Ballet Hispanico, Arts Horizons, and Young Audiences support dance and visual arts while Books Across America, storytelling, and architecture nurture academic curiosity.

**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 proficient.**

School improvement planning is effective, as evidenced by the school making adequate yearly progress on State tests in English language arts. School leaders and many teachers analyze external and internal accountability measures to keep a sharp eye on the performance and progress of individuals, groups and grades, and on school-wide trends. The school has teams and committees with responsibility for evaluating progress toward achieving its targets and so is building more collaboration through a process of identifying needs and modifying interventions in light of continuous monitoring toward goals. Academic intervention team teachers use their analysis of data to question their practice and to broaden their teaching techniques so that those students most at risk succeed. Inquiry team teachers are effectively focused on the identification of key student groups where past performance has been a concern. Teacher assessment binders are comprehensive in monitoring this cyclical process for achieving learning goals. Continued monitoring of the effectiveness of programs through data analysis has resulted in the school abandoning a vocabulary program and continuing to strengthen the use of their existing Headsprout and Foundation programs.

The Learning Environmental Survey indicates that teachers want even more involvement in decision-making at a school-wide level. Their voluntary participation in study groups, lunch and learn, inquiry teams and school leadership teams is the beginning of cultivating a culture of distributed leadership. Grade leaders have a long standing function as a conduit for information to the teachers. How to empower them with more decision-making responsibilities, however, has not yet been explored.

The school's cabinet and some teachers now measure the school's development by analyzing the conditions of learning across classrooms and its impact on student learning and subsequent progress. This is matched with the administration's observation reports used as a tool for determining next steps. The school's general and strategic plans for raising student achievement from year to year are effective in reading, writing, and math, though they are not yet been fully accomplished in social studies and science.

The principal has a very clear vision for the ongoing development of the school. Further ways are being explored to encourage administration, all faculty, and parents to work in closer collaboration so that all members of the school community embrace the vision for school-wide improvement. The school has positioned itself well to build further on the improvements of prior years.

## School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

<b>School name: The Louis F. Simeone 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, DYO, 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.

<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent do ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
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				
<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.</b>							
<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
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				
<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.</b>							
<i>To what extent do...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
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>							
△	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>	✓	<b>Proficient</b>	+	<b>Well Developed</b>