

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

Firefighter Christopher A. Santora School

Elementary School 222

**86-15 37 Avenue
Queens
NY 11372**

Principal: Yvonne Marrero

Dates of review: December 8 - 9, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Diane Sharett

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Firefighter Christopher A. Santora School is an early childhood school with 309 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 2. The school population comprises 1% Black, 74% Hispanic, 14% White, and 11% Asian students. The student body includes 30% English language learners and 4% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007-2008 was 93.8%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 75% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is underdeveloped with proficient features.

Firefighter Christopher A. Santora School is an early childhood school that opened in 2002. School leaders and faculty have a good system to identify which students made progress in their independent reading levels across the year. An Inquiry Team expanded this year to study the bottom 1/3 of students for school improvement. The music program offers students experiential learning, active engagement, the use of a smart board and opportunities for students to evaluate their own learning with improved student outcomes. Teachers have student data binders. Currently, there is not a systematic way to collect and analyze data across all content areas. Subsequently, the use of information from data analysis does not fully inform curriculum planning to support the needs of groups and individual students in all subjects. The range of teachers' instructional strategies is not broad enough to meet all students' individual needs. Mutual trust with the staff and ability to support the academic development of students and staff is not consistent throughout the school. Goal setting for students does not always take place following systematic interim and end of year evaluations to determine growth in all content areas. Parents enjoy the small school setting where their children are happy. However, they feel that ongoing communication could be stronger between parents and the teachers.

Incremental steps are been taken to address the areas of development from the last review. Teachers are not aware of professional opportunities to learn, alongside their paraprofessionals, how to use school, class and student data to provide differentiated instruction. The school has taken the first step, with the introduction of data binders, towards developing a school-wide plan for improvement. Some teachers use assessment benchmarks in English language arts and math. The previous Quality Review also recommended the integration of technology into the instructional program. Suitable plans to improve this aspect of the school's work are in place, but improvements not yet evident. The school is proud of the dual language program, a physical education program started this year, and students have access to varied opportunities through the school-wide enrichment model.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal encourages teachers to participate on the Inquiry Team to analyze and assess student work for improved student learning.
- The music program provides a challenging and engaging curriculum for students.
- The principal has a record of the independent reading levels throughout the school year to track student progress.
- Data binders, introduced at the start of this academic year, begin to address differentiation of instruction.
- Schools curricula in all subject areas are aligned to the State standards.

What the school needs to improve

- Establish consistent data collection and application in all core subjects to provide an understanding of the individual and small group needs of students.
- Improve the ability of teachers, through further professional development, to plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the specific needs of individual students.
- Build on the existing culture of mutual trust and respect with staff to establish a collaborative learning community which supports the academic growth of students and adults.
- Improve the process of goal-setting for the whole school, groups and individuals, and in all content areas, through a tangible system of interim and end of year evaluations to measure progress.
- Use interim checkpoints and data to strengthen lessons, improve instructional practices in all content areas.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

The principal collects and reviews students' independent reading levels by class five times throughout the year, to track student progress. Data binders, established this academic year, are in the first stages of use with the intent of setting goals for students in reading, writing and math. Teachers set individual learning targets, but these are not always measurable within clear timeframes for completion. The school does not embed individual and group goals yet. The faculty has identified a downward trend in reading. Through data analysis, the school has identified that English language learners in the dual language class are outperforming other English language learners, which strengthens their academic competence. The principal and a school aide closely monitor attendance. It remains above 93%.

The principal's open door policy pleases parents. Teachers have opportunities to speak with parents at dismissal, at parent-teacher conferences and at "Meet the Teacher Night". These are useful opportunities to keep parents involved in the progress of their child. Data collection and its use are at a preliminary stage across the curriculum. Students are unsure of their goals besides levels of books for reading. Teachers are beginning to set benchmarks to measure student progress. The school has implemented this year a uniformed professional development plan that uses a rubric that connects to formal and informal observations to provide teachers with feedback and training to improve instructional practices used successfully to provide parents with their children's mathematics levels.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

The principal has established overall school goals for the year, which she shares with the staff. All teachers set individual learning student goals for math and English language arts. Class unit goals are set in science and social studies for students to track student progress. However, interim learning goals and timeframes for reaching these goals are not in place to support student-learning outcomes. In addition, the opportunity to involve students in assessing their work is absent. Data binders are in place across the school, but are not consistent in reading, writing and math to provide necessary data to make informed instructional decisions. Learning targets, although listed, do not directly connect to goals. Writing is a new focus this year and the school has actions in place to address this priority in the Comprehensive Educational Plan. These actions are neither measurable, nor set within reasonable and realistic timeframes. Integrating technology into the curriculum is a goal but this has not started with computers. A teacher stated, "Not too many of us are using technology?" The school leadership team worked together on the Comprehensive Education Plan.

The school leaders and faculty communicate expectations to families by encouraging parents to participate in monthly meetings, newsletter sent, homework folders to provide them with next steps to help their child reach their goals in English language arts and math. Teachers send home monthly newsletters in English and Spanish to inform parents of the curriculum topics taught to the entire class. Other forms of communication are the responsibility of the school leadership team. Families learn about reading levels at parent workshops to support their understanding of the matching of appropriate books to their children. Parents request that the school send stronger and more effective parent teacher communication via emails and/or notices home in a timely manner.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

School leaders and faculty developed standards-aligned curriculum maps and pacing calendars in English language arts and math. However, it is too early to have a major impact on student learning. Leaders also recognize that there is a need to begin aligning all subjects to the State standards. The school introduces the arts through the music and art cluster teachers and a partnership with Studio in a School. The science cluster teacher teaches science, but even in these lessons, there is no differentiation for kindergarten students. The science cluster teacher uses a science rubric yet classroom teachers do not teach science, which limits opportunities for hands on scientific inquiry in classrooms. A physical education cluster program started this year, and classes attend twice a week. The school recently introduced a new social studies textbook program to allow for consistency across the school. Classroom teachers implement Teachers College units of study, using the workshop model approach. Differentiation of instruction is at the very early stages and is inconsistent across classes in ensuring that individual needs of students are met. Staff and students are proud of the Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM) serving kindergarten through grade 2 students, which provides an opportunity to develop the strengths and talents of all students for enriched learning experiences.

Introduction of budget measures to determine the strategic organizational decisions are in place. Identification of an external consultant was viewed as crucial to provide professional development for teachers on writing. Mutual trust and respect with teachers is of great concern as indicated by the Learning Environment Survey. Over 50% of the teachers surveyed indicated that teachers do not work together to improve their instructional practice which impedes student progress and school improvement. The Inquiry Team is the leverage to move the staff forward.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

The school has implemented this year a uniformed professional development plan that uses a rubric that connects to formal and informal observations to provide teachers with

feedback and training to improve instructional practices. Recommendations following these observations lack specificity about the need to differentiate instruction. Different strategies to improve each teacher's instructional practices are not consistently apparent and so their weaknesses remain in their ability to monitor student progress and their competence in the curriculum. New teachers work with a mentor once a week. The school makes appropriate use of the math and literacy coach, a mentor from Fordham University and a retired F-status teacher to support teacher developments. However, lab sites, enabling teachers to watch model lessons, meet with resistance from the staff and this limits the sharing of instructional strategies, curriculum and modifying instruction to meet the specific needs of students. Lunch and learn sessions are held to develop guided reading and learning centers. The principal allows teachers to attend workshop opportunities such as for the arts but instructional strategies learned are not shared with the rest of the staff so new teacher learning does not impact consistently on student learning and achievement. The Inquiry Team successfully expanded from three to six teachers. The team is working with the bottom third of students in their individual classes in an effort to address comprehension skills and main idea. The team plans to share collaboratively developed good practice with the entire faculty. The school does not yet focus professional development in inquiry, allowing teachers opportunities to discuss practices, go on intervisitations and study student work with a focus on student improvement.

The principal participates in a study group on data with her coach. The school is not as effective as it could be in improving teaching and learning, as professional development is not consistently differentiated to directly meet individual teacher's needs. It is unclear if there is sufficient professional development to help teachers understand what they need to accomplish. The school links with Health Plus, Elmhurst General Hospital and Studio in a School, which positively supports families, staff and students.

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 underdeveloped.

There is much work for the school to do before there are regular systems in place to track the progress and performance of individual students. Additionally, the school has yet to modify instruction to meet individual needs, evaluate the success of the interventions and plan individual goals for every student. There is limited planning to improve each teacher's instructional practices that includes measurable goals and realistic timeframes to evaluate success. Monitoring of student progress did not happen last year and was introduced to the teachers last month. Teachers have begun to assess and monitor student progress for reading to ensure student progress, which is not yet evident. The inclusion of interim checkpoints and use of data to inform lesson planning, improve curriculum and differentiate instruction is just beginning. The reading 3D is administered three times per year to show progress in reading and phonics, but as yet, assessment information has had limited impact on teaching and learning to ensure improved student achievement.

The principal is beginning to make use of data to evaluate the effectiveness of and make changes in organizational decisions, professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies. Generation Wireless is used to monitor literacy. Running records, on-demand writing, Everyday Math end-of-unit assessments and Recognizing Student Achievement (RSA's) checklists help monitor student progress. Writing checklists are used to monitor student progress. The next step is to develop a checklist for the units of study. The principal and community have a vision to advance the school

over the next five years, yet there are few embedded strategies to realize this vision and limited carefully planned, timed and measurable actions, ensuring that every student is on line to reach his or her full potential.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Firefighter Christopher A. Santora	△	▷	✓	+
Overall QR Score		X		
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.				
<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?		X		
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?		X		
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?		X		
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?		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 student’s learning.				
<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?	X			
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?		X		
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?		X		
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?		X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 2		X		

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					
Overall score for Quality Statement 3		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					
Overall score for Quality Statement 4		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					
Overall score for Quality Statement 5	X						
Quality Review Scoring Key							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed