

Quality Review Report

2008-2009

Lewis and Clark School

Elementary - High School 012

2555 Tratman Avenue

Bronx

NY 10461

Principal: Kathleen Lefevre

Dates of review: May 4 - 6, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Frank Jones

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Lewis and Clark School is an elementary-high school with 277 students from kindergarten through grade 12. The school population comprises 44% Black, 54% Hispanic, and 2% White students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 81% of the students enrolled and girls account for 19%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 64.2%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The principal is passionate about ensuring that the school meets the students' social, emotional and academic needs. She has provided firm direction and the goals that have been set by both the cabinet and students reflect her commitment and the capacity the school has to develop further. The school has an extremely informative database, which provides a clear picture of the progress and prior performance of each student. However, insufficient attention is paid to this vital information when setting student goals. This results in many goals being vague and limited to English language arts and math. Goals developed by the related services are more refined and pertinent and, therefore, have a positive impact on student development. Students benefit greatly from good quality guidance. Systems in operation and the range of expertise available are welcomed by the students who 'love their counselors'. One of the burgeoning strengths of the school is the quality of transition goals and the enthusiasm with which students adopt them. They provide clear pathways to follow and are constantly reinforced through visual and written reminders of what is required to meet them. Students speak with enthusiasm and confidence about their future and can articulate their aspirations.

The quality and subsequent impact of teaching is variable across the school. Classroom observations are not having sufficient impact on improving performance. Teachers are eager to learn and show a high level of commitment to improving their practice, but the suggestions and support provided is not always sufficiently focused or followed up to ensure progress is made. The concept of differentiation is not embedded in all teachers' instruction and too often learning is class based with students all doing the same activity. Teachers sometimes talk for too long, limiting opportunities for students to be active participants and engage in experiential learning. Tasks do not always match students' needs. This situation changes dramatically when students use prior learning in different situations. Transferable skills in math when used in art provide a practical application and relevance to learning that students relate to well. This is also the case in photography, film making and the store where students see purpose and significance in the activity and are able to explore their own thinking. At these times, students are engaged, attitudes are positive and learning is strong. Student behaviors deteriorate during transition periods when adults do not provide a consistent, corporate message about their expectations. Students recognize this and therefore push the boundaries of acceptability. When students are engaged in their learning and treated fairly, they recognize this and behave in a mature fashion. The principal, counselors and a majority of staff are good role models from which other staff can learn.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Students appreciate and benefit greatly from the tiered guidance and expertise provided by the counselors and the Westside Clinical Program.
- Students appreciate the relevant and enjoyable activities when they utilize learned transferable skills in practical and cross-curricular situations.
- The collection, analysis and distribution of a wide range of data provide a comprehensive picture of the social, emotional, personal and academic performance of each student.
- Students are able to speak with confidence about their extremely focused, successful.
- School goals, developed by administration and staff, are pertinent, measurable and time scaled giving purpose and direction for the school's work.
- Under the principal's leadership, the school has made significant strides in its development and demonstrates the capacity to further improve.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase the rigor and quality of classroom observations to ensure that strategies that impact positively on learning are consistently implemented.
- Ensure all teachers understand and embed the concept of differentiation into their teaching so that tasks are clearly matched to students' differing understanding, skills and abilities.
- Extend the range and increase the focus of students' academic goals, ensuring that they build sequentially on prior learning and direct cognizance is taken of them in the planning and instruction.
- Ensure all adults in the building exercise and adhere to a corporate approach to managing student behavior during transition between classes so that students receive a consistent message.

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 collects a wide range of data from State tests and school-based assessments. This provides a detailed picture of what each student knows, can do and the skills they have mastered. Analysis is carried out by the leadership team and by teachers at their departmental meetings, so they have a good understanding of the performance and progress of the students they teach. The school further disaggregates data by class, grades, subject and other groupings to identify emerging patterns. Information about students is limited at the time of entry. The school swiftly remedies this by carrying out its own assessments, which include an 'interest inventory'. This provides a benchmark from which to measure progress. Scantron is used across the school to identify what students know and where the deficits in learning are. Teachers use this data to plan next steps in learning and address shortcomings. Programs such as 'Everyday Math' and 'Ramp Up Literacy' provide assessment data on each student.

The school uses the 'Online Occurrence Reporting System' (OORS) and the 'School-wide Information System' (SWIS) to inform discussions of the 'Positive Behavior Intervention System' (PIBS) meetings. This coupled with extensive attendance data provides the school with a critical understanding of the personal, social, emotional and academic needs of each student. Each student in the elementary and middle school has a data folio containing the individual education plan (IEP), on-going class assessments and examples of work. These folios are an accurate method of monitoring and tracking performance. To manage the data effectively, the high school has condensed it into an 'at a glance' page. This provides a monthly comprehensive portrait of attendance, behavior, credit accumulation and academic achievement. This information is used to inform the IEPs which all students have.

Parents are kept very well informed about their child's progress and goals through quarterly report cards at elementary level and six times a year for high school students. Progress reports are also sent home providing regular information on attendance and performance. Parents have the opportunity to talk with the principal and teachers at any time because of the school's open door policy. Twice yearly parent/teacher conferences provide a more formal time for an exchange of information. IEP conferences are fundamental to the awareness-raising process and enable parents to support the educational development of their child.

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.

Insufficient use is made of the data to produce focused annual goals in individual education plans. They are often too vague, such as, “increase literacy skills” to provide purposeful direction. The incremental learning steps are more detailed. At the elementary school, goals are derived from the programs being used rather than the specific needs of the student. A similar pattern occurs at high school where goals are driven by the curriculum rather than relating to needs.

There is a significant tension and some confusion that the school has yet to resolve, between the demands of the State and City curricula and the needs of individual student. This problem is less pronounced with higher achieving students. The range of academic goals is limited to English language arts and math. Progress is measured in other subjects against State standards as opposed to prior achievement, giving a distorted view of student progress. Consequently, their usefulness in identifying and planning for the next steps in learning is dissipated. Goals provided by related services are much more robust and provide direction, actions and a firm base against which to measure success. Transition goals are very precise. Students are involved in their development and therefore have ownership. They are able to articulate their goals, appear energized by them and importantly are able to explain with some confidence what they have to accomplish to achieve them. Each student has a credit card with their name, picture and goals on it. These act as a constant reminder of their personal aspirations and the high expectations the school has of them and they have of themselves.

Goals contained in the Comprehensive Educational Plan are especially well crafted and give a strategic rationale and direction to the further development of the school. They are time scaled, measurable and therefore make it easy to monitor progress. These goals emanate from a thorough interrogation of grade and subject data carried out by the administration and teacher working parties. Having identified successes and development areas, challenging goals were written. The school sensibly identified one of the areas in math as the subject for their inquiry group. This resulted in a focused and robust approach to improvement. Teachers are instrumental in school improvement planning and this adds to the validity and understanding of the goals.

The school has an incredibly high turnover of students, which creates difficulties in setting and communicating consistently high expectations. The school has worked hard and successfully through displaying examples of student work and students at work to develop a positive culture. Pictures of individual students outlining credits that are required for them to reach their goal, celebration of student successes and positive behaviors all reflect the burgeoning expectations the school has for its student population. Parents recognize the efforts made by the school and welcome the information and opportunities they have to be involved.

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 school provides a range of curriculum opportunities closely aligned to City and State standards. This is enriched by vocational and skills-based courses, which students greatly enjoy and which provide them with practical experiences. The development of a store built and run by students provides realistic tasks around the demands of the retail world. Similarly, photography and film making provide opportunities not only for students to learn new skills, but also, importantly, to express themselves using other media.

At these times, students are excited and proud of what they create and are highly engaged in the activities. When teachers promote transferable skills in other subjects, students find learning relevant. This was true in art and math, where teachers worked together to provide a practical activities using math in the design process. This is not always the case, especially when there is a slavish adherence to the curriculum supported by exercise books and work sheets. This approach often results in students becoming bored, failing to see the relevance and at times becoming disruptive. The situation is exacerbated when teachers talk for extended periods, resulting in students being passive recipients of knowledge rather than active participants in their own learning.

When tasks closely matched to individual students’ prior knowledge, they are willing learners and their progress is accelerated. However, this practice is not embedded in all classrooms. Vague goals and an over reliance on curriculum coverage rather than addressing individual learning needs adversely impacts on student performance. Where goals are more explicit and teaching reflects this, students achieve well. This is evidenced by the strategic approach to the reintegration of students into general education and the number of successful transitions the school has achieved. As one student stated confidently, “I’m leaving soon to go into a less restrictive environment.”

The school has worked hard to develop and maintain a culture of mutual trust, which students appreciate. They speak positively about the support given to them by the majority of the staff saying they are, “good and fair, and most of the teachers work with you.” The students recognize the improvements that have occurred since the principal was hired and they have respect for (as they said) “the principal and Patterson!” Students generally relate well to each other, but a lack of active supervision and an inconsistent approach to interacting with students during transition times has a detrimental effect on behavior. Students themselves identified a need for increasingly clear and applied parameters.

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.

Classroom observations are undertaken primarily by the assistant principals. The supportive nature of these visits is welcomed by the staff and provides a picture of the quality of teaching and its impact on learning across the school. The regularity of visits is variable and therefore results in a lack of continuity of development. At times,

judgments are not rooted in good practice and are therefore neither consistent nor productive. Observations lack rigor, resulting in a lack of a positive impact on practice as illustrated by the absence of differentiated strategies in too many classes.

The school provides a relevant assortment of professional development opportunities, which teachers are directed to or select from. Staff report that these have been beneficial when new programs are introduced, and especially beneficial to those teachers who have only been at the school for a relatively short time. The school effectively links professional development to school plans such as the Incident Reduction Plan. This has resulted in the majority of teachers accessing training in Therapeutic Crisis Intervention and the school adopting a corporate approach to managing students and their attendant behaviors. Teachers develop their own goals, but the school has not yet initiated specific differentiated strategic goals for each teacher based on information from classroom observations. Professional development, therefore, lacks individual focus.

The inquiry team has made good use of available data to identify both their target group and the area for research. The teaching of geometry was selected as the content base because students in the elementary school were underperforming in this aspect of math. Importantly, it also identified the increasing proportion of marks that this skill attracted as students moved through the grades. Positive teaching strategies that emanate from this research are now being rolled out to colleagues in professional development sessions.

The school has developed effective partnerships with a number of community-based organizations. These include residencies where musicians, artists and writers enhance and extend the curriculum. Students benefit from these enjoyable experiences. Students greatly appreciate the work of counselors, which is extremely effective in addressing the social and emotional needs of all students. Students automatically visit their counselors knowing they will be listened to and supported.

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.

The school is becoming increasingly effective in meeting the long-term goals and aspirations it has for its students. Many courses are well targeted and therefore relevant to meeting student need. The flexible approach of the school to organizational planning has enabled it to manage influxes of students extremely well and address their needs. The movement of individual students to enable them to realize their potential is a common and positive occurrence. There is a high emphasis on acquiring a diploma or moving to a less restricted environment. These successes result in a redefining of the student population and consequent adjustment to programs and teaching styles.

Students are carefully monitored using all available data to ensure they are on track. Where necessary, as with credit accumulation, interventions ensure the students meet with success and courses reflect specific interests and need. Teachers are committed to the students and to improving their practice. Attendance at professional development training is promoting this along with regular, scheduled meetings. On these occasions, they discuss individual students, strategies to support them and share best practice. This reflects the learning community that the school is becoming.

The principal is passionate but realistic about the students and the school's ability to meet their needs. This is a school that knows itself well because of ongoing and robust evaluation of progress. Students join in and contribute to the evaluation through participation in discussion with the leadership team. This heightens their self-esteem, provides a crucial message that their opinions are valued and gives them ownership of the future development of their school. Under the principal's leadership, the school has made significant strides in its development. As staff become more accountable, and systems become embedded, so the capacity for improvement is accelerated.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Lewis and Clark School	△	➤	✓	+
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.

To what extent do ...	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.

To what extent do school leaders...	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.

To what extent do ...	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