

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

The Hector Fontanez School

Elementary School 103

**4125 Carpenter
Bronx, NY
10466**

Principal: Alice Brown

Dates of review: November 17 – 18, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Geri Taylor-Brown

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Hector Fontanez is an elementary school with 1088 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 55% Black, 38% Hispanic, 2% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 14% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 91.7%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 77% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is Proficient.

The Hector Fontanez School is a place where visionary leadership has moved the school to a position where the careful gathering, examination and usage of data has directly impacted on student achievement in many core subjects. The school is a place where teachers embrace the opportunity to lead their peers through collegial work which is seen as teachers visit their colleagues' classrooms. The detailed plan for professional development has been used well by both new and experienced teachers as they refine their instruction to meet students' learning needs. Teachers express both a desire and a need for continued professional development to build their skills in differentiated instruction.

The principal manages this campus of two buildings with good fiscal judgment dispersing resources amongst the main school building and the annex to ensure equity of services for all students. The recent increase in attendance is directly attributed to the purchase of an automated calling machine that is being used to inform parents immediately about student absences and lateness. The school continues to fund a team leader, a position which has proven to be beneficial in supporting teachers, including the organizing of grade team meetings.

Parents are invited to sit in class with their child at least once a month during the "Children at work" day. This open invitation to all parents promotes the culture of transparency that the principal has worked hard to develop. It allows parents to experience firsthand the child's learning environment. Good work has begun with some community organizations to supplement in-school services but school leaders realize that continued emphasis is required to expand the scope in such outreach entities.

The school does a good job in the examination and evaluation of student subgroup data. However, insufficient work has been done in using this data with English language learners to effectively meet their needs especially in regards to aspects of instruction. Specifically, the lack of pacing in such lessons hinders the allotment of time to offer these students sufficient challenge.

Students are proud to be part of a school where, as one student said: "Teachers make my brain work." Students in all grade levels can clearly describe and discuss their learning goals

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has good structures in place that support the regular analysis of data and usage of this data to positively impact on instruction and improve student outcomes in most core subjects.
- The principal is very successful in building capacity for new leaders as she distributes leadership more broadly across the staff with a focus on achieving all school goals.
- The school climate of mutual trust and professional respect promotes collaborative work amongst teachers and in implementing individualized professional development plans.
- The school has high expectations for all stakeholders as parents are actively engaged in regular discussions about student progress who clearly discuss their academic learning goals and explain their next steps towards progress.
- The principal makes very good use of the school budget providing support personnel and resources that are clearly targeted.
- School leaders and faculty use a variety of data sources to regularly and rigorously evaluate strategies and make appropriate revisions to continue to meet both student and teacher learning needs.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to provide teachers with professional development opportunities to sharpen their skills in the delivery of differentiated instruction to meet the academic needs of all but particularly higher and lower performing students.
- Refine data analysis to deepen the understanding of the needs of English language learners and develop the range of strategies used by teachers to ensure each of these student's best progress.
- Continue to develop and expand working relationships with community organizations that offer support services to students and their families that impact on academic and personal growth.
- Fully implement the regular analysis of data in relation to meeting individual student learning needs in all core subjects for student academic success.

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 successfully developed a solid structure in data management that allows school leaders and faculty to get a clear picture of student needs. Teachers use a broad range of both formative and summative data to help plan and target instruction to the learning needs of student in the core subjects of English, math, science social studies and, to a lesser degree, physical education. Data analysis and usage is enhanced by two effective strategies the grade level "data walls" and the "data talks". Both hallway and classroom "data walls" are well used formally and informally by staff, students and parents as a basis for discussion on improving student achievement. "Data talks" between the assistant principals and teachers occur monthly and serve as a benchmark in the timeline of analyzing the effectiveness of teacher instruction.

The school does well in gathering and analyzing the data of student subgroups but the usage of this data in providing well-paced instruction for the English language learner students is insufficient. Early indicators, such as additional resources, evidence the schools' movement towards rectifying this situation.

Staff effectively involve parents in regular information exchanges about students' performance. Parents receive general information about helping children in various academic areas during daytime classroom visits or evening subject workshops. Initiatives such as "Children at work" offer parents an opportunity to sit in on classes, while "Family Learning Nights" give direct information on what home activities are helpful to increase student knowledge. Parent-teacher conferences, frequent telephone calls and other individual discussions with teachers give parents specific information about the academic strengths and challenges faced by their child.

The principal has worked unceasingly to establish and maintain a good data-friendly environment. Continual development in this area includes the implementation of these effective practices to include all core subjects so that staff, students and parents may work collectively to improve student skills and needs in all areas.

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 leaders have actively involved the faculty in developing key goals. The principal has developed the vision of each school goal as "something we want to be better at doing." Each staff member, in turn, has supported the vision of each school goal as "I will help us get better by doing." This supportive system has rendered

effective practices of collaborative planning and setting targets by students and their teachers.

There are interim benchmarks set in nearly all core subjects where student achievement data is reviewed for progress and performance. Such examination of data fueled the inquiry team's current focus on special education 3rd, 4th and 5th graders in English language arts which was noted as an area "in need of improvement" by the State. Teachers expressed concern that the math curriculum did not sufficiently meet the needs of all students. This concern prompted a school-wide vote to modify the current school programming and offer daily academic intervention services in math to support the basic math curriculum. Teacher-made assessments show that this intervention has had a positive effect on student learning.

The school leaders and faculty have done very well in moving students towards the understanding and ownership of their learning goals. Students very clearly articulate their current goals, how these were developed and where they are "going next". Younger students referenced the goals posted on their desks, while older students referred to the classroom data walls and/or their work folders and portfolios to assist them in this activity.

The principal has established a climate of high expectations. There is evidence of improved student behavior during her tenure and, most recently, she has led the campaign for improved on-time attendance with encouraging results. Additionally, the principal is living the open-door policy as she freely provides information to all stakeholders about all school matters. These efforts are greatly appreciated by parents and teachers as evidenced by their enthusiasm and eagerness to participate in all school activities.

Parents believe the school is successful in their inclusion of parents in the academic process. Parents shared how they are involved in school-wide discussion about setting goals and on how they can help their children academically at home in reaching their learning 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 proficient.

PS 103 is a supportive learning community where teachers feel fully included, students feel safe and parents are confident that their children are learning. The principal has led the school in developing a peaceable environment that supports learning.

The school provides a broad State-aligned curriculum that has pacing calendars and curriculum maps. These tools help teachers develop engaging activities that accelerate student learning. Regular grade meetings and data meetings with the assistant principal are good structures that offer teachers continuing opportunities to share and learn effective instructional practices that help student learning.

Teachers effectively use varied instructional strategies to meet student learning needs and increase their academic success. Improvements in teaching and learning have been noted through data analysis in English, math, science and social studies.

However, teachers agree that they are on a journey towards full school usage of differentiated instruction. Effective and flexible student grouping is amongst the emerging good practices implemented as teachers increasingly use assessment data to plan and deliver differentiated activities for students across all core subjects.

There is good movement towards school-wide usage of engaging and effective instruction. However, for optimal learning and exam results for English language learner students there are some deficiencies. School leadership has wisely hired additional English as a second language (ESL) licensed teachers and provided an ESL class for every grade in the school. They also offer bilingual education services and collaborative team teaching bilingual education. This wide range of classes offers the opportunity to address the multiple needs of this population of students.

The principal has used her experience and wisdom to creatively provide additional resources to the whole school. The hiring of extra teachers for additional support and the maintenance of the team leader position during challenging fiscal times is evidence of her skill in this area. The inclusion of an AUSSIE consultant to support individual teacher learning needs enhances the professional development program and is rendering teacher improvement in using varied instructional strategies. Additionally, the principal is adept in school scheduling and the school continues to provide teachers with the rotational “data talks” once a month.

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.

The school has developed an effective and rich professional development plan for teachers. To monitor each teacher’s growth and progress the principal regularly reviews their written plans carefully. This extensive program, based on student learning needs, uses the California Teaching Standards as a measurement for professional improvement. The principal and other school leaders do a good job providing varied constructive feedback to teachers that is linked with each teacher’s individual learning needs. The regular administrative walk-through, using the standards rubric to evaluate instruction, is one source of feedback data that helps teachers improve instruction as they move towards successfully meeting the learning needs of all students. The walkthrough in conjunction with informal and formal interviews is part of this successful and extensive system for accelerating teacher learning.

Just as students own their learning, teachers mirror that behavior as they take responsibility for their teaching improvement through self-reflection and by requesting development in areas they feel still need improvement. This practice of reflection comes directly from the school inquiry team. As a model for distributed leadership, this teacher-led team looked at the students’ data along with a reflection of team practices in the previous year. As a result they developed a new focus group, added members to the team, included technological tracking of student data, and began working immediately in September. All these changes, brought about through reflection, are proving to be effective in the initial feedback on student classroom data. Just as important, these changes have positively affected the practice of teachers in their quest to accelerate students’ learning.

The school sees the value of liaising with organizations that will work closely with immigrant students and their families. Good work has begun with some community

organizations to supplement in-school services. These collaborative working relationships are rendering improvements in student attendance but school leaders realize that continued emphasis is required in their outreach efforts.

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 leaders and faculty have wisely established consistent regular meetings that provide the forum for continual data examination, analysis and revision of services if required. The cabinet meets weekly with an eye towards evaluating school-wide data and participates in strong discussions about developing and supporting teaching and learning. The careful examination of the last State exam results motivated the development of period "X". This academic intervention time was originally developed to provide support for students who may have performed better, but had made little or no progress in math. Teachers meet in grade teams and also during their common planning times to develop agreement on interim checkpoints for collective monitoring. First grade teachers have developed a common three-point age appropriate measurement for their students' learning goals rubric. All first graders and their parents now share a common language that gives them clarity about where they are academically.

The school leaders specifically include all sources of data in their examination and reflection, including the Learning Environment Survey, previous Quality Review, and attendance data. Less formal data is also considered including the instructional walk-throughs and class visitations. The collection of this data is shared transparently with stakeholders and used to implement changes that boost student success. The school is currently monitoring two change interventions: the offering of in-class services for special education students and ESL students. Both interventions are data-driven decisions and connected to teacher professional development to ensure well-prepared and skilled teachers.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: The Hector Fontanez 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, 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.

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>	△	▶	✓	+			
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>	△	▶	✓	+			
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>	△	▶	✓	+			
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							
△	Underdeveloped	▶	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed