

# Quality Review Report 2010-2011

**Forest Elementary School**

**Elementary School Q071**

**62-85 Forest Avenue  
Queens  
NY 11385**

**Principal: Walkydia Olivella**

**Dates of review: December 13-14, 2010**

**Lead Reviewer: Madelene Chan**

## **Part 1: The school context**

### **Information about the school**

Forest Elementary School is an elementary school with 1002 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 1% Black, 45% Hispanic, 45% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 20% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 94.6%.

### **Overall Evaluation**

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal has created a learning community that is well focused on student outcomes by using data to track goals with a vision to continue the acceleration of learning.
  - The instructional team analyzes summative and predictive data along with student work to set school wide goals that drive academic progress. From these goals, the school continues to integrate the Common Core State Standards into the existing English language arts (ELA) and math curriculums and has begun departmentalizing in select grades. Instructional rounds provide staff with data on the effectiveness of school goals which lead to recommendations. Outcomes are measured against benchmarks set and follow through is provided by informal and formal observations. The needs of the English language learners and students with disabilities are specifically targeted and tracked through literacy and math benchmarks throughout the year. From this work, specific strategies have been implemented that have resulted in an 18% increase of students scoring a level 3 or 4 in ELA for grades 3 through 5 based on a comparison of formative assessments overtime.
- Leaders make informed, strategic, and effective organizational decisions across all aspects of the school to support improvements in student learning.
  - As an instructional goal, teachers set benchmarks that improve students' outcomes. In order to attain this goal the principal creatively scheduled two professional development periods each week for classroom teachers to be able to meet as a grade in addition to setting aside time for discourse and reflection. Results of this work have availed teachers the opportunity to focus on the application of students' goals and apply modifications to individual educational plans with a keen eye on long-range plans.
  - As an extension of the school's successful triad model in grade 3 through grade 5, departmentalization has been implemented to individualize teacher assignments, deepen the understanding of the subject area, and elevate the rigor of instruction. Teachers and administration designed this configuration collaboratively and as a result students have shown an increase in scores on pre and post math assessments.
- Teachers collaborate to examine student work, plan together, and visit each other's classrooms to share ideas and best practices so that student outcomes improve.
  - Grade level teacher teams research strategies to best implement differentiated instruction and higher order thinking skills so that the level of critical thinking throughout content areas is elevated. As a result, student work in grade 3 through grade 5 has shown significant progress in details and content, and inquiry work has led to a shared communication, deepening of pedagogical expertise, and strong collegiality.
  - Teacher teams work diligently to analyze instructional strategies through research based ideas and make adjustments to assessments that support their teaching. A recent modification was the change in the writing rubric so that it aligned with and reflected the practices of the Common Core Standards. This

change enabled students to make connections between their written work and teachers' comments showing progress in final work products.

- Students demonstrate high levels of engagement in instructional environments where pedagogy is differentiated to ensure students reach their potential.
  - Balanced literacy is a shared belief embedded throughout the school where teachers agree that offering a variety of supports such as guided and independent reading helps students become stronger learners. This is evident by the increase in benchmarks that have been achieved by English language learners.
  - Grouping students as high, medium and low helps teachers focus on students' strengths while facilitating benchmarks required for them to reach the next level of instruction. By enhancing math lessons and offering a tactile approach through the use of manipulatives, students with disabilities in grades four and five have shown progress on post assessments.
- Families exhibit high praise for the academic and personal support their children receive from the staff so that students meet the expectations and high standards put forth by the school.
  - Reflective practices are evident across the grades in reading, writing, and math. Students complete a rubric assessment based on their knowledge of the given topic and then their peers offer suggestions for growth using the rubric as a guide. This practice has led to consistent progress that is measured by benchmark levels for English language learners and general education students.
  - Parents are enthusiastic about the opportunities provided to them to learn about tools such as ARIS Parent Link and the learning environment survey. Parents explain that they rely on these tools to learn more about ways to help their children at home.
- Administrators and teachers use a wide range of assessment data to monitor school-level needs in order to identify trends of student subgroups.
  - After a thorough analysis of English language arts test scores and periodic assessments, the instructional team determined that third, fourth and fifth graders showed a decrease in level 3 scores. A plan was initiated to provide interventions for those students weak in constructed response techniques, making predictions, and identifying main idea and supporting details in informational texts. As a result, students' scores on formative assessments revealed progress.
  - Teams of teachers develop writing lessons by looking at students' work and aligning teachers' comments with the criteria of the standards. Writing goals for students with disabilities are set based on identified trends in structure, development, craft, and meaning across each unit. Consequently, students are better equipped to apply the rubric in achieving their short term writing goals.

## **Areas for improvement**

- Further develop a coherent curriculum that ensures all students receive a wide range of rigorous and challenging experiences to facilitate their ownership of learning.

- The gifted and talented classrooms have curriculum generated artifacts around the room that depict information about Readers and Writers Workshop which address the trends of some students. However, lessons are not yet equipped to meet the needs of the high achieving learners within each class. Classroom lessons reflect whole and small group work, but the academic tasks are limited in that they do not initiate rigorous habits or higher order thinking skills. Hence, higher achieving students struggle to be actively engaged and appropriately challenged from a strategically crafted curriculum with academic tasks that continuously foster independent learning.
- Extend communication with families that fosters effective engagement in the school community so that parents play an active role in their child's academic success.
  - Although parents are satisfied with the education their children are receiving, they share that better structures for school decision-making opportunities would strengthen their voice as a unit and enable them to learn more about the needs of the school. Parents receive information about their child's learning progress through report cards and parent letters that are distributed throughout the year. A more efficient practice of ongoing communication with parents that outlines the expectations and high level of engagement that is set forth in the standards continues to evolve.
- Expand the use of data analysis to determine the effectiveness of professional collaborations and distributed leadership so that professional growth will build capacity among the staff.
  - The staff refers to the Professional Teaching Standards (PTS) and the Continuum for Planning Instruction and Designing Learning Experiences for All Students to improve instructional strategies. However, these resources have not been used to strengthen teacher capacity-building or decisions made around teacher placement.
  - In support of teacher leaders, professional growth of staff is determined by each teacher's advancement of at least one level in each area of the PTS. Lesson plans, informal walkthroughs and formal observations are used to assess the implementation of this plan. The structures that evaluate the effectiveness of this practice have not yet led to professional development that has supported all teachers' goals or embraced distributed leadership.
- Provide consistent professional development opportunities that strengthen the shared instructional belief of the school and meet the diverse needs of the staff in order to improve the instructional strategies.
  - The administration offers feedback to the staff as a follow-up to formal and informal observations. However, staff has expressed a need for more positive support and actionable feedback around professional growth.
  - The administrative team provides general observation feedback in the form of commendations and recommendations. Post observations lead to discussions by the principal and assistant principals, but there appears to be a disconnection between the recommendations and the professional development offered. Therefore, the impact of differentiated support for the teachers was not clearly evident.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

<b>School name: Forest Elementary School</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			<b>X</b>	
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?			<b>X</b>	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?				<b>X</b>
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			<b>X</b>	
2.2 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			<b>X</b>	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends?			<b>X</b>	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			<b>X</b>	

**Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.**

<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?				X
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?			X	
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			X	
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?		X		

**Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.**

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?		X		
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?				X
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?			X	
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X	

**Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X	
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X	
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?			X	
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?		X		

Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed