

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**The Francis Lewis School**

**Elementary School Q079**

**147-27 15 Drive  
Queens  
NY 11357**

**Principal: George Carter**

**Dates of review: May 4, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Michael Dantona**

## The School Context

The Francis Lewis School is an elementary school with 1017 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 1% Black, 20% Hispanic, 35% White, and 43% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-14 was 95.5%.

## School Quality Criteria

### Instructional Core

<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards.	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels.	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Developing</b>

### School Culture

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations.	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

### Systems for Improvement

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning.	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Developing</b>

## Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

3.4 High Expectations

Rating:

Proficient

### Findings

School leaders communicate high expectations to staff using the Danielson Framework for Teaching and provide training. High expectations are consistently communicated to parents connected to college and career readiness.

### Impact

Consistent communication of high expectations through the lens of the Danielson Framework for Teaching creates a culture of accountability for those expectations. Consistent communication and ongoing feedback support families in understanding student progress toward meeting the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers explain that school leaders regularly communicate and share that “information is being dispersed well.” Teachers state that school leaders distribute weekly memos focused on the Danielson Framework for Teaching. In addition, they share that the new administration has made them feel very welcomed and support their needs by providing training and resources, specifically in Foundations, Teachers College and the Exemplars math program. Staff explains that the building leaders coached them through the implementation of the Exemplars math program by providing the structure and the expectations for its use.
- School leaders communicate high expectations to staff through individual goal setting meetings, department meetings and individual conferences. The principal also engages the staff in “coffee and conversation” to support teachers within the Danielson Framework for Teaching. In addition, school leaders and network staff have engaged in instructional rounds and provided staff with feedback using the Danielson Framework.
- School leaders provide ongoing professional development to communicate high expectations for classroom practices in alignment with the Danielson Framework for Teaching. For example, a professional development session was facilitated supporting the school’s instructional focus on student engagement, whereby staff analyzed school-wide ADVANCE data trends along with a professional article to support improvement in student engagement across grades. This professional development led to a series of expectations for teachers such as: providing clear essential questions; connecting lessons to the learning goal; modeling by using examples; providing structure through the use of rubrics.
- Parents express that they receive communication from the school via school flyers, phone calls, monthly newsletters, the school website and parent workshops. Parents explain that feedback to parents is very prompt and informative. A kindergarten parent shared that a workshop was provided to support parents with how to use short and long vowel sounds and thought it was “great for parents to understand the process.” Another parent added that a fifth grade workshop on setting was provided using Tuck Everlasting and expressed that it helped her to support her child.

## Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Developing

### Findings

The school utilizes common assessments; however, a school-wide system to measure progress across grades level goals over time is at the developing stages. Across classrooms, teachers engage in checks for understanding; however, student self-assessment structures are at the developing stages.

### Impact

While the school has common assessment practices, systems for grade level and school-wide data analysis inconsistently measure impact of school-wide decisions to adjust curricula and instruction. While teachers utilize rubrics across classrooms, student self-monitoring is inconsistent across classrooms.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers engage in checks for understanding through the use of the thumbs-up strategy, teacher checklists, turn and talk, small group conferencing and one-on-one conferencing. For example, in a grade 2 class, the teacher asked the students to “turn and talk” and discuss “why we are doing this today?” A student shared that they were getting a better understanding of their non-fiction text. The teacher followed-up by using the thumbs-up strategy to assess if students were ready for the work period. In a grade 4 classroom, the teachers circulated through the room with a checklist assessing the students while they completed their tasks. The English as a Second Language teacher made an adjustment by using a total physical response strategy to support vocabulary acquisition for the English language learners in class.
- While there is evidence of rubrics across classrooms, student self-assessment was inconsistent across classrooms. In a grade 4 classroom, students were solving area problems in mathematics and were expected to refer to the Exemplars problem-solving rubric and rate themselves. One student shared that he rated himself as an “Expert” in reasoning and proof because he was able to explain how he solved the problem. While student self-assessment was evident in some classrooms, in others, students were not provided with a rubric to evaluate their work. In one classroom, students were preparing to engage in a “chocolate milk” debate; however, they were not provided with a rubric to support their progress, limiting their ability to know their next learning steps.
- A grade 1 teacher team shared that an analysis of student assessment data and the Go Math program led the team to determine that additional problem-solving resources were necessary. This resulted in the school-wide purchase of the Exemplars math program to supplement Go Math. In addition, school leaders analyzed the New York State assessment data to identify standards, which included the individual standard and the percentage correct within the standard; however, the use of data to regularly adjust curricular maps to support key standards was inconsistent across grades and subject areas.
- School leaders aggregate student benchmark assessment data to determine the number of students who exceed standards, meet the standards, approach standards and those that need additional support. While teachers analyze the data from baseline assessments, there was inconsistent evidence of monitoring student progress from the initial baseline assessment. Therefore, school leaders could not accurately determine the impact of instruction and curricula across subjects and grade levels and make adjustments as needed.

## Additional Findings

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

School leaders and staff ensure school curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts while emphasizing higher order thinking in academic tasks.

### Impact

The curricular alignment promotes college and career readiness for all students building coherence across grades and subject areas. The school-wide focus on promoting rigorous academic habits encourages higher order thinking for all learners.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty design curricula to include unit essential questions, content standards, the instructional shifts and Common Core Learning Standards. In addition, units of study have been aligned with the expectations of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, building coherence of expectations across grades and subject areas. For example, unit maps include the expectations for instructional outcomes, design of instruction, design of student assessment, communication with students, use of questioning and discussion and the engagement of students promoting the alignment of resources across units of study and grade levels.
- The school English language arts curricula are aligned with Teachers College Reading and Writing Project across kindergarten through grade 5. Teachers College staff developers support the school's work on this alignment across grades. The adopted math curricula, Go Math, are purposefully supplemented by integrating Exemplars, a problem-solving program. Teachers shared that the Exemplars program was necessary because the data did not indicate that the Go Math program provided enough opportunities for higher order thinking or the scaffolds necessary to support students with "unlocking" the problem.
- The school aligned its grade 5 writing unit of study around writing from sources as well as the expectation that students support ideas with text-based evidence. In math, curricula are designed to promote deepened understanding through investigations. For example, a grade 4 math unit expects students to work collaboratively to apply knowledge to develop a formula for determining the area of a square.

**Findings**

Across classrooms, teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula and support student discourse through the use of questioning and discussion techniques.

**Impact**

All learners are engaged in challenging tasks and high levels of thinking and participation are reflected in student discussions and work products.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The new administrative team and staff revised the instructional focus which now emphasizes that students engage in cognitively rigorous tasks; are involved in inquiry and productive talk; are provided appropriate supports/scaffolds; are assessed and given immediate feedback. For example, in a grade 1 class, students were expected to become expert problem solvers by drawing accurate representations and communicating their thinking. Students were encouraged to think and discuss as a group. One group shared that they were planning how to use a model to solve the word problem using addition and subtraction. Another student shared that he was drawing a ten frame to help solve the problem, promoting deep understanding of math concepts.
- Across classrooms, teachers utilized a variety of strategies and supports to provide access into the lesson, through the use of varied tasks, video, visuals, sentence frames and technology. In addition, purposeful, small group instruction was evident in a grade 2 classroom as they learned to understand more about their non-fiction text. Each student in the small group had individual checklists to support their learning and the teacher prompted the small group with a sentence frame. The teacher modeled using this frame, "I think the author wrote this book because..." Other students explained that they were writing down what they learned and what they noticed about the non-fiction book they chose to read. One student shared that she noticed that "sea turtles poke their beaks out of the water so they could breathe."
- Teachers promote the development and use of academic language to encourage higher order thinking. For instance, in a K-2 self-contained, special education classroom, the teacher modeled how to describe a character in the story using the Smart board, while augmenting student vocabulary by creating a lexical array. After modeling the description of the character the students were asked to turn and tell a partner a juicer word to describe Hector. Students began a discussion and referenced a chart on the wall with juicer language. One student shared that Hector was cheerful and another student shared that he was elated.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### Findings

The majority of teachers engage in professional collaborations; however, the use of an inquiry approach is at the developing stages across teams. Teacher teams analyze student work products and assessment data; however, teams are not focused on students they share or on whom they are focused.

### Impact

While teacher team practices have resulted in an analysis of student work and curricula, systems for inquiry, building teacher capacity, and monitoring student progress over time are at the developing stages.

### Supporting Evidence

- The new administration restructured the expectations for teacher teams. Teams utilize a standardized agenda which includes the purpose of the meeting, the identification of the problem, brainstorming and action planning. Teacher teams meet regularly and occur across grades. School leaders have developed a K-5 vertical planning team, grade level teacher inquiry teams and an inter-visitation team. Inquiry teams meet twice per month to formally conduct grade level inquiry work. School leaders share that they provide support for teacher teams by observing team meetings and providing feedback. Teacher team agendas are collected and reviewed by administration to provide support.
- Teacher teams shared that the professional learning communities established previously were not functioning well. One teacher explained that the new administration adjusted our teacher team practices in January and were just getting up and running. The first grade teacher team engaged in an analysis of student work and began noting specific patterns and trends. Additionally, the team began establishing an action plan to support the work; however, the plan was not explicit as teachers shared a variety of strategies that they planned on implementing making it difficult to determine impact.
- The first grade teacher team began the inquiry meeting by sharing student performance. For example, one teacher shared that the majority of her students were between approaching and meeting the standards. Another teacher shared that sixty percent of her students were far below standards. Teachers shared that the English language learners and students with disabilities continue to struggle. While teachers are analyzing data and developing strategies to support areas of concern, instructional supports are not focused on impacting subgroups of students that they share or on whom they are focused.