



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Forest Elementary School

Public School 071

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

Principal: Walkydia Olivella

Dates of review: April 30 – May 2, 2007

Reviewer: Louise Kapner

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall evaluation

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Forest Elementary School, Public School 71, is an elementary school with 960 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The majority (48%) of students are Hispanic, 45% are White, 5% Asian and 2% Black. Approximately 57% of students are eligible for Title 1 funding which is average when compared to similar schools but below City schools. Nine percent of the students receive special education, either in self-contained or collaborative team teaching classes, or through special education teacher support services. Eighteen percent of the students are English language learners. The majority of newly arrived students are from Albania and Poland. Attendance at 93% mirrors that of similar and City schools.

This is a year of transition for the school. The principal of long-standing retired in July and the interim-acting principal was formerly appointed in late fall. A second assistant principal, previously the school's coach, was added to the school's organization this year joining an assistant principal already in place for the past four years.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a clear vision for moving the instructional program forward.
- New systems are being implemented to develop a clear focus on instruction.
- Implementation of interventions for students most in need of support is well-documented and highly structured.
- Professional development is a high priority and well-used to support instruction.
- Teachers create learning environments where students are actively engaged and know what is expected of them.
- Parents are welcomed into the school and seen as partners in their children's learning.
- Technology is used well to support instruction.
- The school is highly committed to implementing data-driven instruction.

What the school needs to improve

- Provide further opportunities for teachers to share best practices and differentiate instruction.
- Find ways to establish and maximize parent participation.
- Analyze the data of student sub-groups in more detail.
- Provide further opportunities for staff to set interim and long-term goals and in developing, designing, implementing and revising new programs and initiatives to meet the needs of targeted students.
- Look at ways to further improve the 93% attendance rate.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The review agrees with the school's evaluation that this is a proficient school. Forest Elementary School provides a welcoming environment for students and parents. The newly-appointed principal is focusing on providing an instructional program that addresses the needs of all the students. Over the past five years, the school has embraced the America's Choice model for literacy and mathematics. However, a review of the data shows that while the school has made significant gains on the standardized exams, it is still not achieving as well as similar schools. One assistant principal recognized that "we are not yet where we need to be." Therefore a major focus this year is, as one teacher shared, making "data our friend". Staff are now using the statistical data to analyze student performance, plan instruction and monitor students' progress more effectively. Plans are in place to involve them more in goal setting and monitoring activities and to increase opportunities for the sharing of good practice. Professional development is on-going and addresses the needs of staff members. New programs are being introduced that further builds a strong instructional program. High expectations are clearly shared with students and parents, although not as many parents as the school would like are fully involved. With the strong leadership and the commitment of staff, the school is well placed to build on the new systems.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

This school gathers detailed data on the performance and progress of the school and students. The principal makes good, in-depth use of available data, including results from the standardized and interim assessments and extensive school-generated data to plan and drive instruction. Diagnostic reading and writing assessments are administered three times a year. The generated item skills analyses enable classroom teachers to differentiate instruction and identify students at risk of not meeting standards. Unit checklists from Everyday Mathematics, conferring notes and student work are used to gain a secure understanding of the needs of individual students. Data from programs for early-childhood special education students and from a the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test, which is administered three times a year, are used to monitor progress and identify the needs of students who need extra help to learn and of English language learners. Subsequent transitional services are provided as appropriate.

Monitoring of student progress is extensive and on-going. Results from the assessments are analyzed and charted for each student. This provides an up-dated and detailed understanding of the performance of each student throughout the school year and informs instruction. While the school tracks the performance and progress of each student very well, it does not yet disaggregate data by ethnicity, gender, and other groups of interest in

sufficient detail to quickly note any trends and patterns in performance and progress and identify if one group is making faster progress than another.

The school's longitudinal study of results from 1999 through 2006 on State tests in English language arts, mathematics and science compare performance and progress for the official testing grades three to five. Data for English language learners is compared by grade, class and for individual students to monitor progress. The principal also reviews her school's results relative to other schools in the District and Region. Comparison of the performance and progress of the different sub-groups is not yet established.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Review of the school report card gave the in-coming principal enough information to plan and set immediate and long-range objectively measurable goals for school improvement. For example, in a very short period of time, she has been successful in focusing the staff on using available and school-generated data. Each teacher downloads student data onto a personal memory stick to help make informed teaching decisions. Guided instruction that is appropriate to students' different levels and needs in all subjects is being effectively implemented. Teachers, coaches and administrators are collaboratively planning and implementing instructional strategies to successfully raise student achievement. The principal recognizes the need for "teachers to work smarter, not harder" and is working hard to put the systems in place that will make a greater impact on supporting all students. Goals and plans drive every member of staff's work, although as yet not all staff are directly involved in setting long-term and interim targets for student achievement.

Highly skilled and well-trained staff provide well-differentiated academic intervention services for those students most at risk. Detailed identification of needs and monitoring of progress is effective. For example, students receive computer-based instruction, phonemic and reading fluency remediation and help with developing decoding skills to boost achievement. As a result, some second grade students made significant growth from level 2 to level 6 and are now meeting grade benchmarks and are confident learners.

Classrooms prominently display instructional rubrics and clear expectations for standard-based work so students are clear about what is expected of them. A rubric for 'What Good Writers Do' in a kindergarten class was accompanied by a happy face for attaining the highest level, three points. Students feel good about their work and as one said, "Teachers conference with us and tell us if we are doing well. They let us know when we can step it up a bit."

Goals and plans for accelerating their children's progress are shared with parents formally, through report cards and teacher conferences, and informally at other times. Some parents have been trained as learning leaders and volunteer in classrooms to work with small groups of students. While they are highly appreciative of the school's efforts, parents do look for "more specific information of what is needed for their children to pass" and want more "additional educational opportunities for parents". One parent expressed an interest in learning to use computers and another in learning English. There are presently not enough programs for parents to engage them more fully in the school's work.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school’s work well developed.

The school’s curriculum is mainly mandated but includes enrichment classes, such as ‘Music and the Brain’ which enables early grade students to learn to play the keyboard and to sing along in different languages. Although in its fifth year as an America’s Choice school, the principal feels a need to enhance and expand the school’s literacy program. A coach from Columbia University Teachers’ College will be starting shortly to work with upper grade teachers on incorporating the writing workshop model. The mandated Everyday Mathematics program provides both a structured approach and detailed interim assessment data to further inform instruction.

Teachers are highly accountable. Data is used well to identify students’ needs and plan suitable work. The school makes good use of extensive additional instructional programs for students most in need of differentiated support. Students are actively engaged in learning, for example, using colored cheerios to support their learning about fractions or turn and talks to share their work and ideas. Computers give students good opportunities to work independently on instructional tasks and enrichment projects.

Decisions are clearly thought-out and well articulated for budgeting, staffing, and school and classroom scheduling, and are based on documented student needs. For example, additional weekly common meeting time has been incorporated into each grade’s schedule to allow for professional development in the use of data and differentiating instruction. Staffing positions for next year are being reviewed to capitalize on the strengths of different teachers in supporting different groups of students.

Student attendance is a high priority and reviewed daily with absences quickly followed-up. Students are responsible for missed assignments. The climate of the school is one that encourages a high level of respect and positive attitudes. Students are confident to trust at least one adult with any concerns and many discuss their problems with a counselor.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The principal is highly energetic and respected. She is effectively working to create a staff of skilled educators, who are willing to learn and to interact positively with students. The same criteria will be used as she looks to expand the administrative team. The focus is on creating an instructional team that uses data to meet the needs of all students. A staff handbook with school policies and procedures that is provided at the beginning of each year and followed by all staff ensures the school runs smoothly.

The principal has made professional development, which is firmly based on teachers’ needs, a very high priority. She frequently participates in professional development to further her own skills. A recent workshop on ‘Building Collaborative Teaming to Support Effective Instruction in English as a Second Language’ provided staff an opportunity to learn new strategies to support mainstreamed English language learners. Teachers are effectively engaged in activities to support improved student outcomes and often meet to

plan collaboratively. Faculty and grade conferences and intervention team meetings provide good opportunities for discussions and planning. However, classroom inter-visitations are minimal and sharing of best practices is not scheduled. As a result, opportunities for staff to learn from each other and share best practice are lost.

The principal and assistant principals often visit classrooms and engage teachers in conversation asking, "Why do you think this has to be done? What data are you using?" Students are asked to articulate what they are doing. The principal is emphasizing the need and developing teachers' understanding for instruction to have a positive impact on students' learning. The post-observation narrative and a teacher self-reflection focus the discussion on classroom practice, student engagement and areas that need further development for both student and teacher.

School counselors provide successful character education lessons to students and well-established and productive partnerships with community agencies further enhance the school's goals. Successful student teachers from St. Josephs, a near-by college, often become full-time staff. The Greater Ridgewood Youth Council sponsors a five-day after-school program for academic support and recreational activities and is highly supportive of the school's goals.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The principal has set a challenging agenda for herself and the school. The present Comprehensive Education Plan, while not fully representative of her focus, has provided a basis from which to identify and review interim goals. The principal effectively uses the results from interim assessments, teacher generated data, monitoring activities and student work to monitor performance and progress of students, to compare student progress and to assess the school's progress towards meeting its goals. Revisiting and revising of plans is on-going as the school focuses on improving student outcomes. Presently the use of data in reviewing program effectiveness is supporting the principal's implementation of focused professional development to help teachers learn how to gather data from various sources, to gain a greater understanding of student needs and to help in further differentiating instruction. Teachers are gaining a greater comfort in this process. Their monitoring of student performance and progress and classroom instruction is reflective of their growth in learning to use data. Resources and school practices are realigned to support the school's efforts.

Goal setting for next year is a high priority. The Comprehensive Education plan is now under review and the school leadership team is working collaboratively to plan ways to address the school's and students' needs. Currently, staff members are not consistently included in developing, designing and implementing new programs and initiatives. However, all this is about to change and staff will be involved in the annual review this year. Use of available and school generated data, information culled from learning walks, student work and teachers' self-reflections are being used well to support the formulation of next year's goals.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Forest Elementary School (PS 71)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score		X	

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> each student, classroom, grade level, 			X
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 		X	
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> all other categories of interest to the school* 		X	
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1		X	

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.		X	
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.		X	
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.		X	
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2		X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.		X	
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.		X	
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.		X	
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.		X	
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4		X	
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.			X
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X	