



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Francis J Murphy Jr. School

Elementary School 039

**71 Sand Lane
Staten Island
NY 10305**

Principal: Robert Corso

Dates of review: November 16 - 19, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Chris Andrews

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Francis J Murphy Jr. is an elementary school with 483 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 4% Black, 25% Hispanic, 58% White, and 13% Asian students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 2% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 - 2007 was 92.9%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 59% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The collection and use of data is very good and provides evidence to drive instruction which meets the needs of students.
- Support for students in greatest need of additional help is excellent.
- Expectations are high and are shared with parents and students, who are committed to trying to meet them.
- Students clearly enjoy coming to school and are engaged by their instruction, and particularly by the use of technology which is excellent.
- Teachers generally differentiate their instruction well and have a clear understanding of each student's level of performance.
- Resource management is very good and ensures that the school can respond effectively to the changing needs of the student population.
- There is a strong collaborative ethic among the teachers which enhances their professional development and provides very strong mutual support.
- The partnerships with outside entities enrich the students' educational experiences and contribute to meeting school goals in their social development.
- Parents have a very high regard for the principal and the teachers, and welcome the sense that the school is "very family orientated".
- The principal and cabinet have a clear vision for the school and have the capacity to deliver it.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to develop teachers' skills in data analysis to allow them to maximize benefits from the new assessment procedures.
- Develop strategies and interventions to ensure that students who are working at or above grade level maintain progress.
- Further develop communications between home and school to ensure that whole-school goals and procedures are shared with the wider community.
- Align the school monitoring and review cycle with the new assessment pattern.

Part 3: Main findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Francis J. Murphy Jr. School is a school characterized by its focus on raising the performance of its students through the collective efforts of all members of the school community. At the center of this is a principal who has a clear vision for the school and the energy and expertise to deliver this. A wide range of data is collected but is disseminated to the teachers in manageable formats which provide them with the evidence on which to plan their teaching. Differentiated instruction is good through all grades, although the school recognizes that those students performing at or above grade can be provided with more challenging work in a more systematic fashion. The use of technology is both excellent and instrumental in engaging students.

Teachers and parents work generally in close cooperation to raise students' performance and their scores in standardized tests for the past four years show ongoing progress for most students. Well-structured programs are in place for those facing the greatest challenges in their learning. Since the last Quality Review, steps have been taken to review the data by student subgroups and the results of this analysis are used to guide instruction. Plans are in place to tackle remaining areas for development in terms of data analysis and interpretation and to align the school review cycle with the new assessment procedures.

The inquiry team has been established, has held a series of meetings and has a clear focus on areas for development within the school

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 the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The collection and use made of data is very good and provides evidence to drive instruction that meets the needs of students. The principal ensures that teachers have the appropriate data for their classes, in clear graphical representation by groups as well as for individual students. The data comes from the diagnostic reading assessments, the reading and writing assessment profile and predictive tests. Teachers create profiles which loop forward providing an academic history for each student. Central to all of these assessments are the skills analyses which allow teachers to differentiate their instruction to target areas of weakness for each student. Students in need of special help, whether in special education or as English language learners, are identified early. This happens using informal assessment by coaches, from teacher observations or from the more formal

testing procedures. For these students a range of strategies are in place, the impact of which is shown by a steady improvement in test scores and students' English proficiency.

Data is now analyzed more closely in terms of a range of subgroups within the school so that patterns of performance can be detected and addressed. This awareness and an appreciation of the different learning styles of boys and girls have contributed to the ongoing improvements in test scores in both English language arts and math. Partnerships developed with two similar schools have allowed teachers to intervisit and see how similar challenges are being met in different institutions. There have also been examples of shared professional development and collaborative grant writing which have made the relationships closer. Teachers comment favorably on the value of this for their own professional development as well as for student progress. Additionally coaches have observed the positive impact in classrooms. There is ongoing training to further develop teachers' skills in terms of data analysis and to raise their expertise so that they may benefit fully from the new assessment procedures. This is a part of the coaches' role and will provide one area of focus for the inquiry team.

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 well developed.

The detailed analysis of data is used to set goals for each student. Teachers have overall goals for each year, such as addressing the current focus on reading fluency, and recording unit tests to keep track of these goals. The cabinet uses the data from these tests to direct professional development and to ensure that the students are receiving appropriate instruction. The discussion of this teaching takes place mainly at grade meetings but such is the collaborative culture of the school that student progress is regularly discussed by teachers during preparation periods and at lunchtimes. Parents highlight, as a school strength, the fact that their children are very well known by all their teachers, and that they show a great interest in their personal development as well as their school work. English language learners have been identified from the data and discussions as a particular subgroup in need of additional support. There is also an appreciation of a need to develop strategies and interventions to ensure that students who are working at or above grade level are challenged more systematically to enable them to maintain their higher levels of progress.

Students in greatest need of support are well catered for. The academic intervention team operates very effectively in each grade, as can be seen from both observations and student progress. The support takes various forms, with "push-in" and "pull-out" programs well established in normal school time. The extended day and Saturday academy provide additional support for those at risk, with students working in homogeneous groups. The Saturday academy, which meets the needs of grades 3 through 5, also is available to students working at levels 3 or 4 who require or have requested additional enrichment. The impact of all of these various programs can be seen in the improving test scores.

Communication between home and school is generally good and parents are well supported by the school to help their children. Conferences allow for an exchange of information which is mutually beneficial. Parents are encouraged to share their concerns and respond to student's report cards. There is less clarity among parents, and indeed among teachers, about whole-school, as opposed to individual, goals. Whole-school goals are not shared sufficiently with the wider school community.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

The schools’ curriculum is well developed and its delivery has been greatly enhanced by the teachers’ growing confidence in their use of Smartboards. All classrooms have these and they are used in a genuinely interactive manner, with students writing on the boards and using ‘drag and drop’ activities to demonstrate their understanding. Teachers are beginning to write their own materials to work with these boards, thus aligning them even more closely with their instructional needs. The use of Airliner Slates in conjunction with the Smartboards enhances their use as the students can manipulate the Smartboards from their seats, both saving time as well as developing their motor skills.

Students are clearly engaged by the range of activities, the challenge in these and the different groupings that teachers employ. Differentiation is very good in all grades. Students are organized into groups using data from skills analyses and are then set to work on a common theme at a range of levels. Thinking skills are developed through problem solving in one group with another focusing on understanding very basic concepts. Students enjoy their classes and parents appreciate both this and the individuality of their children’s programs of instruction.

Resource management is very good and ensures that the school can respond effectively to the changing needs of the student population. The ongoing development of a very well-equipped teachers’ resource room and the expansion of technology across all grades from pre-kindergarten through grade 5 have driven up performance. The principal continues to manage the school budget flexibly to direct resources to the point of need, for example to support professional development for two priority areas, technology and the teaching of English language learners.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

As the single administrator, the principal places great reliance on the cabinet. Its members focus strongly on developing both teachers’ expertise and the collaborative culture within the school, and both have been achieved successfully. Teachers new to the profession or to the school are well supported by the coaches and an external mentoring program, and this support is reinforced by more experienced colleagues. This is typical of a staff where informal intervisitations are common and the principal is very encouraging by providing funding to allow visits to other schools. The impact is clear in well-structured, challenging lessons where differentiated instruction and the focused use of technology engage students’ enthusiasm and interest. Professional development is often the result of Department of Education initiatives or of needs identified by the school, but it is also the result of teachers’ own requests, either from surveys or by direct requests to the coaches.

The school runs smoothly and effectively. Students feel very safe in the school and this is a view strongly articulated by parents. Transitions between classes and at the ends of sessions are well managed. There is a clear sense of purpose in the school and this is reflected in the excellent bulletin boards and the students’ clear understanding of routines.

The principal evaluates all programs provided by outside entities with the clear aim of seeing “what they can give to the kids”. For example, he handpicked the staff who run the United Activities Unlimited after-school program, and has encouraged programs as diverse as ceramics, music and sports. These contribute to the fulfillment of a key aim of the school, which is to provide the widest range of learning experiences for the students. Parents and students find these most valuable and the students show in conversation how they benefit in terms of confidence, the development of self-esteem and pure enjoyment.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for 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 well developed.

There is a clear program of monitoring and review of plans, primarily by the cabinet but involves all teachers in terms of their class and grade goals. The principal reserves one common preparation period in each month, chaired either by himself or his coaches, to address any areas of concern arising from this regular analysis. Monthly faculty meetings also address whole-school issues. In this way, the principal is able to target areas, teachers or groups of students in need of further development. There is a particular focus on potential holdovers, who are identified by a review of their portfolios along with assessment scores. Conferences with parents then produce individual plans and interventions, the impact of which has been to reduce the numbers of holdovers over the past four years.

The Comprehensive Education Plan is central to the school’s development. In many cases, improvement goals are set in terms of percentage increases to facilitate both measurability and tracking during the year. The improvements in science have come about through this data analysis, as it resulted in more science provisions in the classroom and in supportive professional development for teachers. The process of reviewing was linked to the regular Princeton testing but in the light of recent testing changes it has become necessary to align the school monitoring and review cycle with the new assessment pattern in order to maximize the value to be gained from the changes.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Francis J Murphy Junior School (PS 039)	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
Quality Score				X	

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

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?				X	
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?				X	
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?			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 students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?			X		
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?				X	
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?					X
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?					X
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?				X	
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other's classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another's instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4				X	

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for 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 include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.2 the school's plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?				X	
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?				X	
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to make strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?				X	
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan's interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?				X	
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X	