



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

James P. Sinnott School

Intermediate School 218

**370 Fountain Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11208**

Principal: Joseph Costa

Dates of review: May 3 - 7, 2007

Reviewer: Charles Lupton

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 James P. Sinnott School is an intermediate school serving 954 students in grades 6 through 8. At 51%, the majority of students are Black, with 36% Hispanic, 11% Asian and other and 2% White. Special education students comprise 14% of the school's population and 12% are English language learners.

The school receives Title 1 funding with 75% of students eligible, which is above that found in similar and City schools. The current attendance rate is 90%, which is below that of City schools and the same as similar schools.

The school is organized into three academies that serve students from each grade. Each academy has a magnet class as well as special education and bilingual Spanish classes. There is one bilingual Hindi class for the whole school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is held in high regard by the whole school community and has the capacity to continue to develop the school.
- The school collects a wide range of informative data.
- The quality of data analysis, particularly in English language arts, is of a very high standard.
- The school runs smoothly with clear, consistent routines that facilitate good student attitudes and behavior.
- The students and staff have good levels of mutual respect, resulting in good relationships and mutual trust.
- The school leadership is very collaborative with good, accountable, delegation.
- The academy structure is effective in promoting small learning communities.
- The staff handbook is informative and sets out clear routines for staff to follow.
- The school is pro-active in seeking to increase parental involvement in the school.
- The school environment is well maintained with good, current displays of student work on bulleting boards.

What the school needs to improve

- When planning for short-and long-term school development, build upon existing good practice to include objectively measurable, interim measures of success with agreed timeframes.
- Further develop data analysis to include more detailed comparison across classes, grades, academies and identified groups of students to monitor the impact of the plans on school development.
- Continue to develop the use of data to inform differentiated instruction and implement this in all classes, raising levels of engagement.
- Ensure that all members of staff are actively involved in evaluating themselves and each other, utilizing data to discuss student needs and inform instruction.
- Ensure that data collection is consistent across the whole school.
- Further develop the school's procedures for clearly communicating constructive feedback to students, developing consistent methods of setting high goals and expectations.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The school is effective in collecting and analyzing data to give it a clear understanding of student performance and progress. It uses this data effectively to understand the relative performance of students individually, by class and between classes. Teachers use data to plan for instruction well and to group students but the data is not universally used to differentiate instruction.

School goals and plans clearly focus on whole school development. They build on previous plans and, mainly through good professional development, are effective in driving the school forward under the guidance of the respected principal. However, the plans do not contain clearly identified, objective measures of success within short and long-term timeframes.

The students like and respect the staff and know they can trust the staff to respond to their academic and social needs. As a result, the behavior in the school is good and classes are generally calm, leading to the students being engaged in their lessons.

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.

The school uses available data well to build a clear picture of the progress of individual students, classes and grades. This information is supplemented with additional quantitative data from, for example, the Princeton Review. This enables the school to broadly confirm student performance and update its understanding. This is further supplemented through the collection and analysis of qualitative data. Although this data is collected by all staff, there are inconsistencies in the rigor of the collection across the school, with a variety of tracking systems in use. Using the combination of qualitative and quantitative data, the school has a clear understanding of the achievement of English language learners and special education students. The school is aware of the different performance of ethnic groups but this data is not updated through school-generated data.

The school has identified a number of sub-groups, for example, those at risk of academic under-achievement and some higher achieving students. It uses a combination of data sources to track the performance and progress of these groups. The school is aware that it should identify further groups, including students achieving at high level 3.

The school has a good understanding of its performance over time and in comparison to similar schools. It has a good, up-to-date knowledge of the relative performance of students, classes and grades and uses this data to develop interventions. The school is effective in tracking the performance of each academic subject. However, it does not disaggregate data to compare the relative performance of the academies or by ethnicity.

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.

The school leadership team is very collaborative and the instructional cabinet works effectively to set goals for improvement. The plans focus rigorously on improving student performance and there is a strong collegiate drive for school improvement. Through the teams developed from this cabinet, all teachers and many support staff are involved in the process although not all members of staff are as active as each other. While the plans are detailed with clear goals, they do not contain rigorous, objectively measurable success criteria or timeframes for completion. As a result, the school does not monitor the impact of its planning empirically.

The plans focus effectively on the whole school, individuals and classes but do not routinely identify specific grades. The organizational structure of three academies, each with its own assistant principal and specific aims, is very effective. However, school goals do not contain specific plans for the academies. Consequently, there is no real distinction between the academies although there are slight differences in instructional emphasis.

The academic intervention team and the teachers utilize a wide range of interventions to improve the performance of students in greatest need, particularly those at level 1 and 2 and are effective in meeting the needs of these students. The school also runs effective programs for English language learners and students with interrupted formal education.

The parents interviewed feel the school sets high standards for student achievement and that the school is effective in communicating this to their children. Although many students are aware of their performance and progress, there are inconsistencies across the school in the effectiveness of the feedback given to students. As a result, not all students receive the same quality of information about what they need to do to improve.

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 is well developed.

The school follows the mandated curriculum and supplements this with additional material that is designed to collect meaningful data, for example, Gates MacGinitie reading tests, to inform planning for instruction and to realize the school’s goals. In addition the school has developed additional curricula to support students in, for example, music and technology. The school uses i-teach and i-learn as part of its instruction and has good technology resources that are used regularly. The use of interactive whiteboards is well developed and effective. The Social Studies curriculum is taught through English language arts. The school has developed clear pacing calendars for all subjects.

Teachers are held accountable for their instruction through focused walk-throughs and formal and informal observations. Data is used to identify trends in student performance and to call teachers to account. Although teachers utilize data to inform and plan instruction and to group students in individual classes, data is not consistently used to differentiate instruction. However, some good examples of differentiation were observed,

for example, in an English language arts class, the students were divided into three groups, each with work appropriate to their levels of comprehension. In these classes, students were actively engaged in their work whereas in other classes, while all students were working, they were not engaged as actively.

Decisions concerning staffing, scheduling and budgeting are firmly based upon data. For example, using data, the 8th grade magnate classes are split to facilitate a Regents mathematics class. Also, data indicated that the Read 180 intervention strategy was not effective, resulting in the hiring of an additional teacher and rescheduling 6th grade classes.

Relationships between staff and students are good and students report that they like and trust the staff who support them academically and socially. Attendance is a high priority for the school and there are effective measures to ensure the attendance rate is maintained and improved.

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.

Since his appointment, the principal has had very few opportunities to hire new staff. However, as an experienced principal, he looks to hire teachers based upon a variety of criteria that include their past record, classroom management skills and curriculum knowledge. Whenever possible he hires teachers who are known to him. Each year, all staff are provided with an exhaustive handbook that clearly identifies all aspects of their role and provides an effective framework to underpin instructional expectations and routines. As a result, the school runs very smoothly with clear procedures.

The major route to the implementation of school plans is through focused and targeted professional development that is planned throughout the year. Plans for professional development are effective in improving instructional practice and are used flexibly to address identified developmental needs for individual members of staff. For example, data indicated that students were not able to use inference effectively and this resulted in targeted professional development, resulting in improved class performance demonstrated after the next testing period.

The staff work well together collaboratively, mainly to plan for instruction although some discussion is referenced to the data. Good links are made between subjects as part of the planning process. For example, the science teacher frequently aligns his instruction to English language arts, mathematics and social studies and recently incorporated the study of levers into building a pyramid to overlap with a study on Ancient Egypt. Inter-visitations take place frequently and are seen as important by the staff and administration to develop good practice.

The administration team and coaches conduct frequent informal class observations and focused walk-throughs. Following these visits, constructive feedback is given to improve instruction, which is followed through with, for example, additional professional development. The principal is respected, particularly as he gives positive feedback on, for example, the quality of bulleting boards.

The school has good partnerships with support services and outside agencies that are effective in improving academic 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 Comprehensive Education Plan is a very thorough document that contains development plans for each area of the school. It is, however, very long and incorporates many elements that are already embedded in practice and do not need to be continuously included. The plan is mainly realized through the good professional development that takes place. However, the plan does not contain objectively measurable interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress, relying too much on qualitative data sources.

The school utilizes data effectively to compare the progress of individuals and classes and uses this information to adapt provision to respond to changing need during the course of the year. For example, data demonstrated that in a 6th grade special education class, the students were underachieving in reading. This led to an increase in phonemic instruction that resulted in increased performance.

Information from one planning cycle is used to inform future planning to drive school development and improve performance. For example, in the past, class scheduling for the following year, based upon data, was achieved in August leading to significant disruption in September. This is now achieved in June, resulting in all teachers and students already in the school clearly understanding their schedule in time for the new school year, facilitating better individual planning.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: James P. Sinnott (IS 218)	∅	✓	+
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	