



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**The John J. Pershing School
Junior High School 220
4812 9th Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11220**

Principal: Loretta Witek

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Reviewer: Chip Morrison

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The John J. Pershing School, is a large junior high school currently serving 1315 students in grades 6-8. Approximately 48% of students are Hispanic, 40% are Asian and others, 10% are White and 3% are Black. About 10% of students are identified as special education students. Approximately 20% of students are recent immigrants (about half from China) and 35% are classified as English language learners. To accommodate these students, the school provides English as a second language classes and runs bilingual programs in Spanish and two Chinese dialects: Putonghua and Cantonese. The school receives Title I funding as approximately 86% of students are Title-I eligible. Average attendance is 93% which is slightly higher than that for similar schools (91%) and City schools (92%). Approximately 92% of students remain enrolled throughout the academic year. As of 2004-2005, the school was operating at 105% of its rated capacity.

The school has recently been organized into three theme-based small learning communities, Mathematics and Architecture, Medical Science, and Environmental Science, each headed by an assistant principal, each of whom also has subject-area responsibilities. In addition, an assistant principal for organization oversees academic intervention services for at-risk students. The instructional leadership team also includes a mathematics coach, a literacy coach, lead teachers at each grade level, and an academic intervention team.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has assembled an especially strong and experienced instructional leadership team that works well together and has a clear, shared vision for the school.
- The school makes especially good use of data from City and State assessments to identify student needs within the school as a whole, and within each classroom.
- Academically, the school has made significant strides in recent years as reflected in improving scores in language arts and mathematics.
- The school offers a full range of academic support services for students.
- The school works hard to meet the needs of its large immigrant population.
- The school works effectively with various outside organizations in ways that benefit students academically.
- The school runs smoothly and disciplinary incidents have decreased significantly since the leadership team implemented a “zero-tolerance” policy.
- Instructional leaders have made significant progress in developing regular assessments that measure progress over time.
- The school has made some early progress in the development of a schoolwide portfolio system that has the potential to supplement test data in powerful ways.
- The school has compiled data from teacher made surveys to drive professional development and focused study groups.

What the school can improve

- Extend opportunities for promoting ongoing collegial discussions about instructional quality and lesson design among all teachers.
- Consider formalizing the collection of data on observed features of classroom instruction and using this data as a basis for ongoing discussion of instructional quality.
- Extend the use of regular classroom assessments to help teachers better judge what students are actually learning.
- Engage the entire faculty in an ongoing process of setting specific, measurable, challenging, and time-bound goals for improvement, and closely monitor progress towards these goals at the classroom level.
- Continue to monitor and improve the effectiveness of services for English language learners.
- Carefully monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of programs for at-risk students.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The John J. Pershing School has made significant progress in recent years by improving basic instructional quality, teacher accountability, and student discipline, leading to reasonable improvements in student academic performance. The principal, who has been in the position for three years, has assembled a highly experienced and hardworking instructional leadership team and coaching staff that has the capacity to drive continuing improvements in instructional quality. This team has embarked on a number of new initiatives, including the development of a school wide portfolio system, regular mid-term assessments, the division of the school into small learning communities, and improved opportunities for faculty collaboration, all of which hold considerable promise for future improvement of student learning.

The leadership team has a good practical understanding of the needs of the school and the direction it must follow if improvements in student performance are to be maintained. Among these is the need to establish the means for monitoring and promoting instructional quality in all classrooms, increased emphasis on student writing as a measure of achievement, the setting of concrete, measurable interim goals for improvement, and the continuing development of assessment systems that will allow teachers and instructional leaders to monitor progress toward attainment of these short-term interim goals.

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 well-developed.

The school makes especially good use of existing student performance data to identify academic needs for individual students, grade-level cohorts, and other relevant subgroups, including ethnic groups, English language learners and special education students, particularly in language arts and mathematics. In addition to data obtained from State and City testing programs, the school makes good use of its own mid-term assessments and instructional leaders are very aware of the school's performance in comparison to similar schools in the surrounding area, and use these comparisons as a motivation to improve.

Thanks largely to the data analysis skills of one of the assistant principals, the school does an especially good job of taking data provided by the State and putting it in a form that allows teachers to identify the performance levels of students in their classrooms. This gives instructional leaders a means of tracking the "value-added" performance of individual students, grade-level cohorts, and ethnic groups from one year to the next as a means of getting a clear picture of the impact that instruction is having on students (including individuals and groups), regardless of their starting points. The school is in the process of implementing its own interim assessments as a means of tracking growth in student learning during the course of a year.

The instructional leadership is in the process of developing a school wide portfolio system, based on, but extended from, the City-mandated English language arts system for 7th grade that was first implemented in 2005-2006. The system is currently implemented for all grade levels in language arts, and it is intended that it will eventually encompass all subject areas as well. At the present time, considerable work remains to be done to flesh out this system, including development of consistent scoring rubrics and training of teachers on how to use these scoring rubrics consistently.

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.

While the primary emphasis is on setting goals for individual students, there is also considerable emphasis on the performance of particular groups, notably English language learners, students with disabilities, and the growing Asian population. The instructional leadership team is clearly focused on State-mandated Adequate Yearly Progress for these subpopulations, and plans accordingly, especially with respect to its language learners, many of whom are newly-arrived immigrants from rural sections of China. The school does not yet have clearly-stated interim goals for these and other subgroups as a means of helping to ensure that the school remains on track throughout the year to meet its AYP goals. To help meet identified needs, students are offered a full range of academic support services. However, there is as yet no effective means of monitoring the quality and effectiveness of these instructional settings.

The school communicates with parents through the use of report cards and progress reports, and benefits from the services of an excellent parent coordinator. The school is responsive to queries and requests for meetings with staff from concerned parents. However, it has not yet overcome many barriers to enlisting large numbers of parents as active partners in their children’s education, particularly from the Asian immigrant population. The school recognizes this as a need and is exploring resources and strategies for improving communication with this population.

The general goal of moving students along the performance continuum from level 1 to level 4 drives the everyday activities of teachers and instructional leaders. Further work on setting specific interim, group-level goals will be necessary to provide additional opportunities for closer monitoring and feedback.

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 proficient.

Students read extensively at their independent reading level but there is currently no formal method for monitoring the extent that students are reading independently, or setting goals for advancement from one reading level to the next over the course of a year. The school has recently begun to develop a school wide portfolio system to monitor student accomplishments in core academic subjects. However, considerable work remains to refine this system.

The school has developed its own mathematics curriculum and instructional leaders are working hard to promote a workshop model of instruction in mathematics. However, this is implemented with varying consistency and quality. Instructional leaders pay attention to improving teaching and learning in science, social studies, and the arts, particularly through very effective partnerships with various outside organizations including the Lutheran Medical Center and the Center for Students, Teachers and Families. Teachers generally hold themselves accountable for the progress made by student in their class, but instructional quality varies from one classroom to the next and much of the classroom talk is too teacher-directed. Some staff are using a workshop model, but there is no consistent framework for monitoring implementation or building professional development opportunities around this model. There is insufficient differentiation of instruction to ensure that all students are sufficiently challenged.

Budgeting, staffing, and scheduling decisions are focused on improving student outcomes, especially for students in need. The principal has, for example, used her Title I budget to reduce class assignments for grade 7 teachers to 24 periods per week, with the extra period being used for weekly team meetings to review progress and plan next steps.

The school does an especially good job of working to meet the non-academic needs of students. School-based support services include a “student intervention teacher” in each small learning community who in addition to enforcing the discipline code provides behavioral interventions to reduce negative student behaviors. The support service team meets regularly to plan and implement strategies. Attendance is not a serious issue and prolonged absences trigger immediate attention.

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 leadership team has rigorous procedures for selecting staff but teachers are selected more for their experience and demonstrated teaching skills than their ability to use data, which is considered secondary. However, newly appointed teachers receive strong support in the form of formal coaching and mentoring, and informal support from colleagues. Professional development decisions are guided in part by an understanding of teacher and student needs that comes from classroom observation, teacher surveys, reviews of student portfolio work, and careful analysis of student performance data. There is currently no common framework for defining, measuring, and discussing instructional quality that could provide a means of tracking improvement over time while enhancing the coherency of professional development plans.

Planning and sharing of best practices occurs at monthly departmental meetings and grade-level meetings, but the school is still exploring ways to increase the availability of time for planning, review of student work, and other formal opportunities for teacher collaboration. The principal is well-respected by the leadership team, and delegates authority well. Under her leadership, the school has made substantial changes in recent years in respect to improved school climate and collegial collaboration.

The principal is especially concerned about ensuring that the school runs smoothly. To this end, she maintains a constant and consistent presence throughout the school, ensuring that rules are understood and followed. Deans, school safety agents and

assistant principals all work collaboratively to sustain high expectations. The school has several useful partnerships with outside organizations. Among the most important of these academically is the relationship with the Maimonides Medical Center and the Environmental Protection Agency.

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 school has annual targets for improvement of scores in core academic subjects, and monitors attainment of these targets on an annual basis, as part of the Comprehensive Education Plan process, making adjustments at the end of each year based on measured progress in critical areas. However, because the school does not set interim goals, it is hard to measure progress and make necessary modifications to plans over the course of the year.

The school has done useful work in setting up formative assessments that allow the instructional leadership team to monitor progress toward these goals on a regular basis. Information from these assessments is used by the instructional leadership team and teams within the small learning communities to revise plans, including the pacing calendars, to better address identified student needs, and to focus staff development and classroom observations. Although the school has begun to put a system of interim assessments in place, it has not yet gone through the process of formulating clear interim goals that would allow the school to track progress on a regular basis.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The John J. Pershing School: (JHS 220)	∅	✓	+
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 strategies 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	