



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Johann DeKalb School

Public School 270

**241 Emerson Place
Brooklyn
NY 11205**

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Johann DeKalb School, PS 270, serves 283 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population reflects the local community with the greatest proportion of students (73%) from Black families, 26% are Hispanic, and 1% is White. The percentage of special education students is 17%, and less than 3% are classified as English language learners. Instruction is in English. The school has fewer students who are newly arrived to the country when compared to similar and city schools. The attendance rate at the school is 90.8%, which is just below the rate for similar and City schools. The percentage of students with Title 1 eligibility is 80%, which is higher than in most City schools. The number of suspensions in this school in 2005 was below that in similar size schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and assistant principal are respected and work well as a team to set and improve the positive values of the school.
- Teachers know their students well and provide good levels of academic support and guidance for their students.
- There is strong collegiality among staff who all collaborate well and take part in regular discussions about teaching strategies and student work.
- The school's leadership has a good understanding of the school's strengths and of areas that need improvement.
- The school is determined to continue the positive trend in student achievement that has been seen over the past two years in English language arts and mathematics.
- Classroom libraries are leveled and organized helpfully to encourage and facilitate the development of students' reading.
- Reading benchmarks are used productively by teachers to identify students' reading progress.
- The school is child-centered and the social needs of students are met well within a nurturing environment.
- The school provides a bright attractive learning environment that celebrates student academic and artwork and encourages learning.
- Parents feel valued and respected and as a result are increasingly involved in their children's education.

What the school needs to improve

- Collect data more rigorously and consistently throughout the school and use the data more effectively to build a more complete picture of the performance and progress of all student groups.
- Ensure the curriculum is developed further to ensure it generates meaningful quantitative data.
- Develop staff skills in utilizing data more effectively to plan and differentiate instruction.
- Ensure that school planning contains clear, objectively measurable short and long term success criteria to monitor the implementation of planning more effectively.
- Ensure that each student knows what he or she has done well, what is needed to improve, and how to do so.
- Strengthen the use of formative feedback to students so that high expectations are consistently explained and set.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The Johann DeKalb School has made considerable curriculum improvements over the past two years and these are now reflected in the improvements in student outcomes. The principal knows the school well and has valuable insights into its strengths and weaknesses. He continues to work hard to improve teaching and learning and move the school forward. Collegiality on the staff is strong and discussions around strategies and student work reflect their commitment to students' academic and social needs. Support staff work productively together with classroom teachers to enable low performing students to attain higher levels of achievement.

The school makes good use of data to understand the progress of students and to plan for school improvement and instruction. Plans contain clear goals, but do not contain objectively measurable, short- and long-term measures of success or timeframes. As yet, the school has not formalized the use of periodic assessments to measure and adjust instruction for individuals or groups of students.

The school's corridors are brightly decorated with students' art and celebrations of their work. There is an atmosphere of achievement and success for all. Students respect staff and their school and are nurtured in the school's culture of community and caring.

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 successfully uses a range of data including formal assessments, unit tests, running records and conferencing within classes to identify and check student progress and put in place support programs for those not making good progress. The administration has analyzed data to build a good understanding of individual student progress. The school also has a reasonable understanding of the relative performance of grades and classes, but this in the early stages of development.

Reading benchmarks are used to accurately track student progress at class and grade levels in English language arts, and also to group students within classes appropriate to their instructional level. The administration has initiated discussions with teachers about the rate of student progress and has now begun to identify informally, individual and common strengths across classes.

The data is collected and analyzed primarily by the administrators who evaluate the annual performance of the school and compare outcomes with past performance and those of similar schools. The school has an effective understanding of the performance and progress of English Language Learners and special education students. Although the school has a broad understanding of the relative performance of students by ethnicity, this is not embedded. There is good communication between classroom teachers and

academic intervention teachers who support students with the lowest achievement and those with social needs. This work has had a positive impact on the school's effectiveness and has brought about an improvement in student performance and progress for these groups. The school recognizes the need to develop collaborative structures to increase teachers' capacity to use data more rigorously and consistently. This will enable them to identify and track the progress of specific student groups, for example, by gender and higher achieving students across the school.

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.

Data is used accurately by teachers and coaches to identify students' progress within classes, and to discuss appropriate strategies for individual student achievement. However, teachers do not fully utilize all available data, nor do they match their planning and practice or day-to-day teaching with the data. Elements of students' development in literacy and mathematics that are successful are identified, although less emphasis is placed on planning to improve and impact on learning.

The principal designates a day at the end of the academic year for planning so that staff can formulate goals for the next year. This ensures that there is a common vision and drive for moving students and the school forward by class and by grade. It also improves the consistency of the teaching practices throughout the school. Administrators and cabinet members have prioritized long-term plans with measurable goals enabling them to focus on improved student performance. Although plans identify some timeframes for reaching goals, they do not include objectively measurable, interim success criteria. As a result, the school is not in a strong position to measure the impact of its planning.

Students identified as needing greatest additional help are effectively supported. Students' needs are diagnosed and constructive additional support programs are put in place to provide academic and social intervention when required. Discussions between teachers and academic intervention staff ensure that progress toward stated goals is made.

Parents feel that the school has positive expectations for their children, and they are kept informed about their children's progress. The parent coordinator provides effective additional academic assistance to students and, through outreach, to parents. Although teachers regularly conference with students, they are only in the initial stages of using the conferences to set goals and expectations for students and making them aware of their learning targets and progress.

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.

The school follows the mandated curriculum, which is enhanced with units of study and writing procedures. Although the curriculum does generate useful data, the information is not consistently used to support the school’s expectations. Block schedules for English language arts allows for implementation of a balanced literacy program. The school is working to encourage teachers’ implementation of the workshop model and effective accountable talk, but this is not consistently in place. Teachers in each grade have weekly common preparation time to plan lessons, particularly in literacy and mathematics, but data is not universally used to inform this planning.

Teachers’ rubric-based comments and marking criteria that inform students of next learning steps are not yet in place across the school. Consequently, some students do not receive formative feedback on their work or guidance on how to improve it. This limits valuable opportunities for reinforcing high expectations, as well as limiting students’ responsibility for their learning. Although some enrichment activities are planned, for example, music lessons, the principal is aware that more opportunities need to be developed.

The school uses class observations and data analysis by the administration and coaches to monitor the effectiveness of instruction. Teachers use data effectively to plan for small group instruction and some targeted teaching. However, although differentiation is an identified school focus, teachers are not held accountable for this aspect of their instruction or for the consistent collection of data. Consequently, data is not used effectively to plan for differentiated instruction. Students are motivated and engaged in learning but better differentiation would actively raise this engagement.

There is a nurturing and positive atmosphere in classrooms and throughout the school. Staff know their students as individuals, particularly the challenges or difficulties students may have. This results in students trusting staff and knowing they can go to teachers and staff members for help and support.

Budgeting and staffing decisions are effective and informed by data. For example, the school has budgeted after school and “Super” Saturday programs to target at risk students. The purchase of additional materials for classroom libraries has strengthened and supported the school’s goals for increased achievement.

Although attendance issues persist, these factors are being effectively addressed through parent outreach, phone calls, monthly award assemblies and incentives to recognize students with good attendance. As a result, there has been a steady increase in attendance over the past few years.

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.

Staff are selected using criteria that include high expectations, a willingness to work collaboratively with administrators and colleagues and a genuine commitment to understanding the unique needs of the student population. This helps to ensure that newly hired staff work closely with colleagues within a common vision for the school, this is impacting positively on student performance.

Professional development for staff in the areas of English language arts and mathematics are key school priorities. The principal has strengthened the focus on teaching and learning through teachers' participation in Teachers' College workshops but the impact of professional development is not yet monitored in all areas. The school cabinet leads the way in aiming to develop a professional culture. Staff are open to their own professional learning and are willing to consider new strategies and programs, for example in phonics and writing in mathematics, to address students' learning needs. The literacy and mathematics coaches are effective in consistently supporting new and experienced teachers through demonstrations and study groups, quickly developing their understanding of pedagogy and practice. Lab site teachers offer effective opportunities for inter-visitations and sharing of best practices.

The principal and assistant principal work well together as a team and are respected by staff, parents, and students. They use both formal and informal observations constructively to give feedback and guidance on improving classroom instruction. However, the process is not fully developed; the leadership is not yet utilizing the observations to identify and build future capacity, particularly in relation to the use of data to inform differentiation.

The school is well organized and runs smoothly with clear expectations and procedures, which actively support good student behavior. Partnerships with community-based organizations, including the Jackie Robinson Centre of Physical Culture, are well established and effective.

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 undeveloped.

The school's annual goals and key priorities for school improvement are presented in the Comprehensive Education Plan and the principal's professional review. Goals for improving instructional practice in each subject area are clearly stated and measurable in the long term. However, specific short-term goals with interim benchmarks for success are not consistently established. As a result, the school does not monitor the impact of its planning on a routine basis. The school recognizes that a systematic plan for implementing and monitoring goals and interventions would better facilitate modifications of instructional practice and resources based on established interim criteria.

The school uses data to understand the progress and performance of individuals and classes but this information is not routinely utilized to compare the progress of classes and student groups. As a result, the school is not in a strong position to recognize the need to modify its processes in response to changing student requirements during the year. However, the administration does use some data to identify the school's progress towards the realization of its planning and to drive successive planning cycles. For example, data indicated that achievement in mathematics was below that of English language arts. This

resulted in the school hiring a mathematics coach to address this need. The school's determination to continue the positive trend in student achievement that has taken place over the past two years is a positive indicator that the school does have the capacity to grow and improve.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Johann DeKalb School (PS 270)	∅	✓	+
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		