



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Jim Thorpe School

Public School 370

**3000 West 1 Street
Brooklyn
NY 11224**

Principal: Susan Goldberg

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Reviewer: Helen Donnellan

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 Jim Thorpe School provides instruction for 246 special education students from kindergarten through grade 12. The main site is located in South Brooklyn, with eight further programs located across the borough, offering elementary, high school and work-site programs. Students have a range of needs including severe emotional and behavioral needs and autism. Students at the main site follow standardized assessments while other students follow alternate assessment programs. A significant number of students do not have continuity of education at the school, owing to time spent in hospital or in other programs.

Sixty six percent of the students are Black, 15% Hispanic, 13% White and 6% Asian and other. Three percent of students are English language learners. Fifty nine percent of the students are Title 1 eligible, which is lower than City schools.

The monthly figure for attendance at all of the sites ranges from 70% to 74%. However, this masks variations in attendance at different sites, from between 62% to 90%.

The principal was appointed in September 2006. There are two assistant principals.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has established a collaborative culture, where the views of staff are taken into account in decision-making processes.
- The principal makes clear the need for changes, giving staff the reasons for the change.
- High expectations are made clear to staff and students.
- Students are active and engaged in classes.
- There are productive working relationships with host schools and work site providers.
- The principal promotes the use of data and uses this to identify where changes and improvements are needed in order to improve learning outcomes.
- Staff under-performance is challenged and staff members are given support to help them improve.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that staff members at all of the sites comply with the school's agreed systems and procedures.
- Carry out formal observations of teachers at all sites, recognizing their strengths and areas for development, and giving specific constructive feedback.
- Ensure that all staff gather data routinely and present this in easily understood formats.
- Analyze and compare data to indicate patterns and trends.
- Define actions in plans with precise and measurable goals and interim measures, so that progress of students can be monitored throughout the year.
- Develop the arts and physical education curriculum and extend the use of technology for instruction and learning.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The Jim Thorpe School is undergoing a process of change following the appointment of a new principal in September 2006. She has taken time to collect information on the school since her appointment and used this to inform changes needed to move the school forward. Steps have been taken to change the approach to gathering and use of data, so that staff will use it as a tool to inform their work. Collaborative working is an increasing part of the way in which the school works, between colleagues at the same site and across different sites. The school encourages parents to be actively involved in their children's education and works hard to overcome previous experiences, where contact with school was a negative experience rather than a productive one. Changes to align instruction with the needs of students, using data as the basis for instruction are being implemented. Teachers are held to account for students' progress and performance. There is a clear focus on improving professional practice and ensuring that staff at all sites are treated equally. The school values its working partnerships with host schools and work-site providers, which enhance learning opportunities for students. While the school's planning processes currently lack measurable goals that support effective monitoring, the school is flexible in reviewing how it meets the changing needs of its students.

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 undeveloped with some emerging proficient features.

The principal has rightly identified that the school needs to improve data collection in order to obtain accurate and up-to-date information on students at all sites. At present there is inconsistency in the ways that data is gathered. At the elementary site, there is rigor in assessing students and presenting information to give staff a clear picture of what students can and cannot do. At other sites, staff members do not assess newly admitted students promptly enough, so the work set is not always sufficiently well-matched to the instruction provided. Recent work has produced manually collated data for students on both standardized and alternate assessment, which gives staff some insights into overall student, class and grade performance and progress.

Information is routinely gathered on the progress of English language learners, including those using technology to communicate, to ensure that they continue to develop their skills. Data is increasingly shared with students. Student reward systems have been established which use data on learning and behavior to highlight those students who demonstrate improvement.

The school is attentive to the needs of students re-entering the school after time in hospital and other programs, where they may not receive instruction. Changes to individual education plans are made where assessments show improved performance, regression or lack of retention of earlier knowledge and skills. The systems used to gather information on the students at work sites has not been up-dated to reflect the current work skills used

by students, which gives a limited record of the progress of students and the difficulties they face. The school has started to compare data, but this is recent and not yet established across all sites. Data is not yet presented to staff in easily understood formats, which reduces how data is used. The principal compares data on incidents of challenging behavior to identify critical times and locations, which are then reviewed to minimize future incidents. Data is not used to compare the progress of students at different sites, so the administration does not have a clear view of its strengths, weaknesses, patterns and trends.

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 introduction of collaborative working is part of the changing culture of the school. Teachers plan intervention and class instruction in groups. Students’ individual education plan goals are now influenced by assessment data, to ensure that they closely match the students’ needs. While staff meet to agree how the individual education plan goals will be met and agree actions, specific plans that make clear how those goals will be met are not defined. These short-term actions do not form part of a defined sequence planned to enable the student to achieve their goals. The individual education plan goals do not always have a clear focus and often refer to generic subject areas, rather than distinct skills or knowledge to be mastered, so teachers are unclear of specific areas to be addressed.

Teachers’ observations, data or re-entry to the school trigger reviews of intervention or school site, so that the students’ needs can be more appropriately addressed.

School-based students and their families are made aware of their strengths, past achievements and future goals through regular conferences. Parents and students contribute to the individual education plan goal-setting process, so that goals reflect are relevant to school and home life. However, the students at works-sites are not clear about specific goals and skills to be mastered. Workshops provide opportunities for parents and grandparents to participate as partners in school life and they are encouraged to apply learning and behavior approaches at home.

Supervisors at the work-sites compile regular feedback on their students, giving detailed information on attendance, behavior and tasks accomplished. School staff and supervisors work closely together to change levels of challenge, location or address concerns, presenting a unified approach to the students. The administrative team makes clear to support services that active contributions to student programs are needed, so that teaching and services work in partnership. Where this does not occur, actions are taken to remind support services of their roles, in order to improve services for students.

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.

One of the outcomes of the principal’s review of the whole school was to increase the time for instruction particularly in English language arts and mathematics. This applies to students on alternate and standardized assessment in order to comply with mandated requirements. Teachers are diligent in adapting subject content to meet the needs of all

students, with high-interest and low-level materials and adapting materials to provide for the needs of non-verbal students. Staff and students identified the need to provide more creative and expressive arts and physical education in the curriculum to widen opportunities for learning. The school is well equipped with computers and technology, but these are under-used as a resource for instruction and learning.

Each month objective data is reviewed with all teachers, who are required to show student progress or account for lack of progress. Instruction is differentiated through the use of data and teachers integrating student's interests into lesson content.

The principal has reviewed the use of staffing, budget and instructional time carefully and identified priorities for change. Information on student learning and behavior incidents has been well used to pinpoint areas in need of improvement, but have yet to be fully addressed. High-interest and low-level materials to support learning in English language arts and mathematics are being sought as part of a drive to improve learning for all students. The impact of recent changes to the way the school day is organized, increasing time available for staff and coaches to collaborate to plan instruction is not yet apparent.

Students enjoy classes where they participate and are active in their learning. In some classes recorded materials are used as an alternative to text books and allow students to work with less support from adults. Where teaching is strong, students are challenged and given opportunities to work independently.

Students are accepted as individuals and are treated as equals by staff and each other. They are confident to approach trusted adults to share and resolve their concerns. Staff members are particularly attentive to the needs of non-verbal students and when small changes in responses are detected they overcome causes of anxiety or recognize positive changes.

Attendance varies between the sites and steps are being taken to increase attendance at all sites. Improved attendance at the career and technical education site is now established, through increased interest in stimulating programs which hold students' interest. Incentives have recently been introduced to encourage students to increase attendance at other sites, but the impact of these has yet to be seen.

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

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The principal is clear that staff need to be highly motivated to work with challenging students and seeks evidence of strong classroom skills through demonstration lessons when hiring staff. During their induction, they receive formal training on how assessment data is to be gathered and applied. All staff members are required to comply with district 75 requirements after attending external professional development, by stating how they will apply their learning. Under-performance is challenged by the administrative team and staff members are given appropriate support to help them improve their practice.

The administrative team has a sound understanding of the strengths and areas to develop of staff at the school sites. Formal observations of staff at school sites are carried out at regular intervals by the assistant principals, with written feedback that defines strengths and gives constructive guidance on areas in need of improvement. The administrative team considers these formal observations alongside the information from the principal's informal observations and data on learning outcomes to gain a full picture of staff. There is less information on staff at work-sites, as previous observations lacked focus, depth and no reference was made to professional development or constructive development.

Sharing information across the school sites is rightly seen as crucial at this school with nine sites. Senior staff from all sites attend regular cabinet meetings to ensure that staff has consistent information regardless of where they are located. Specific working groups include staff from all sites, for example on literacy, where common practice is shared and developed. There is some sharing of good practice between staff at the same site and learning from each other is seen as a growing part of professional development.

The principal is working hard to establish relationships with staff, working partners, parents and pupils. She does not accept situations at face value and takes time to explore the perspectives of others. She is resilient in the face of personal challenges and continues to make clear the need for change, in spite of those challenges.

The staff handbook clearly sets out the requirements to be followed by all staff, to ensure consistency at all sites. While procedures are defined, some staff are reluctant to apply these and do not demonstrate loyalty to the administrative team. The school is described as being calmer and running more smoothly as a result of the structures and procedures brought in by the new principal.

The school has established effective working partnerships with host schools and work-site staff. Difficulties have been overcome at the career and technical education school which have led to improved test outcomes for the PS370 students placed there. Work-site staff accept students as colleagues and support them well in developing work skills.

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 goals in the current Comprehensive Education Plan lack specific measures to enable progress them to be monitored and quantified. This means that the monitoring lacks thoroughness and staff are not clear about their actions in relation to the Comprehensive Education Plan.

The school acknowledges that monitoring of progress made by students is insufficiently robust and consistent to give an accurate indication of performance. Procedures are now in place for this, through sampling of individual student binders and formal tracking of progress against individual education plan goals. The impact of these actions is not yet apparent.

Data is being increasingly considered and used to determine the effectiveness of interventions to support individual students, groups of students and wider school issues. One example is how the literacy focus group makes effective use of running records to evaluate progress made by students at the main site and determine future groupings of students. Staff frequently review student progress and make changes to actions, which shows adaptability and responsiveness.

The principal is reviewing all of the school's processes, including planning and decision-making processes. The previous absence of whole-school planning is being addressed and the school is starting to use agreed processes which integrate planning, resource use and assessment data. This is a change of culture and a new way of working for the staff at all sites.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Jim Thorpe School (PS 370)	∅	✓	+
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	