

**Jesse Isador Straus School**

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**Public School 199**

**270 West 70th Street**

**Manhattan**

**NY 10023**

**Principal: Carol Stock**

**Dates of review: May 8 – 10, 2006**

**Reviewer: Godfrey Bancroft**

**Cambridge Education**

# **Jesse Isador Straus School**

## **Content Of The Report**

### **Part 1: The School Context**

Background information about the school

### **Part 2: Overview**

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

### **Part 3: Main Findings**

What is the school's overall performance

How well does it meet New York City's evaluation criteria

Other key observations

### **Part 4: Evaluation Criteria Grade Summary**

## **Jesse Isador Straus School**

### **Part 1: The School Context**

#### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This is an elementary school with over 500 students enrolled. The socio-economic circumstances of the community are very favorable and the number of students Title 1 Eligible for a free school lunch is much lower than found in most New York City schools. The number of students who are English language learners is relatively low, however, the enrolled students are representative of a wide range of backgrounds and cultures. The students' attainment on entry exceeds that expected for their age. Most students make good progress and go on to attain grades that are higher than expected.

## **Jesse Isador Straus School**

### **Part 2: Overview**

#### **What the school does well**

- Students make good progress and many attain standards that exceed those expected for their grade.
- Students behave very well. They are confident and well-motivated learners.
- Instruction and learning are good. At times they are of the highest quality.
- The development of students' speaking and listening, and their reading and writing is very good.
- The curriculum meets the needs of all students very well. All areas of learning for the youngest students are addressed effectively.
- There is very good support for special education students.
- Teachers support students' personal, social, and emotional development very well. Consequently, students are happy at school and feel cared for and valued.
- Parents and guardians are very supportive. They feel the school is good. Communications with parents and guardians and the information provided for them is of the highest quality.
- The students and those who work at the school benefit greatly from the inspirational leadership of the principal.

#### **What the school needs to improve**

- Involve students more in the evaluation of their own learning.
- Ensure that teachers have all the information they need as students transfer to their new grade at the beginning of each academic year.

## Jesse Isador Straus School

### Part 3: Main Findings

#### Overall Evaluation

**This is a well-developed school and has some outstanding features.**

Students make good progress and many attain standards that exceed those expected for their grade. The quality of instruction and students' learning is very good. The school benefits greatly from well-developed leadership and management. The leadership is very successful in creating a culture of self-awareness and continual improvement. The school is very successful in meeting its own mission statement and goals.

**How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria.**

**Quality Statement 1: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor and facilitate the student's progress over time.**

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

The school uses a good range of objective assessment procedures to measure students' progress and gain an accurate view of the standards they attain. These measures include local and nationally used tests that enable meaningful comparisons to be made with other schools. The school is highly self-critical. The leadership gives significant time to considering the implications to be drawn from comparative data and to ensuring that the school is performing as well as it should. The school's test procedures are used consistently within grades and across the school. However, teachers are eager to provide students with the best possible education and would like to have even more information to hand when students transfer between grades. This information already enables teachers to identify any weaknesses in students' attainment and to put programs in place to improve performance. Even so, teachers would like to do even more thorough preparation in advance of students starting in their new grades and classes. Regular 'Class Reviews' are held in which the progress of each student is discussed and actions to bring about improvements are identified. These reviews include the student's teacher, members of the leadership team and others, such as para-professionals, who support the students' education. This means that all interested parties are fully aware of the achievement and progress made by each student. These reviews are part of a very effective set of procedures to ensure that the needs of each student are recognized and that they are enabled to achieve the best possible grades in relation to their capability. All data concerning each child is considered and used very effectively to guide plans for improvement.

**Quality Statement 2: 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 well-developed.**

The principal and assistant principal consistently involve themselves closely in monitoring the grades that students attain. They are fully involved in activities, such as class reviews, enabling them to have very good knowledge of the learning needs of each student.

## Jesse Isador Straus School

Teachers also work closely and effectively in grade teams to ensure that they are fully aware of students' learning needs. This aspect of teachers' work helps to ensure that each student in each grade receives the same good opportunities to support their learning and progress. It also ensures that each teacher who has contact with a student knows about their particular learning needs and about the procedures that are in place to ensure the best possible progress is made. Teachers have suitably high expectations of the standards students are capable of attaining and set appropriately challenging goals. Communication with students and their parents and guardians is very good and they are made fully aware of the progress that is made and the grades their children attain. There are frequent, well-structured, formal occasions when parents and caretakers can meet with teachers. In addition, the school's leadership and teachers are available for discussions with parents and guardians on a day-to-day basis. Parents and guardians are very appreciative of these frequent opportunities to discuss their children's progress. They are very aware of the detailed knowledge that teachers have about their children. They are also very appreciative of the early notice they receive in the event of any problems and concerns that might arise about their children.

**Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.**

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

The curriculum for the youngest students is good and meets each aspect of their development very well. The curriculum for older students is matched well to their needs and that for special education students is very good. The day-to-day organization of the school is good and teachers' time is used effectively. In addition to English and mathematics, very high priority is given to students' aesthetic and creative development. The success of this is evident in the quality of students' work in art, drama, and music. Teachers, in their grade year teams, work together very well to plan the curriculum and ensure that all students receive the learning opportunities they need.

The quality of instruction and learning are good. At times teaching reaches the highest quality. This is especially true of the ways in which teachers develop students' speaking and listening and how they teach them to read and write. Teachers provide good opportunities for students to write for a range of purposes and audiences. On these occasions teachers match work very accurately to students' learning needs and to the grades they have attained. Samples of students' writing show very good year-to-year progress. Teachers are very good at celebrating the quality of students' work, which is displayed prominently around the school.

Students are encouraged to become self-critical and evaluative from an early age. Even so, some teachers do not do enough to involve students in the assessment of their own progress and the identification of what they need to do to improve in a lesson-by-lesson context.

**Quality Statement 4: 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 overall well-developed.**

Teachers and children respond very well to the inspirational leadership of the experienced

## Jesse Isador Straus School

and very knowledgeable principal. She has successfully developed a culture in which students and adults are able to thrive and in which students make good progress and attain good grades. The principal also ensures the school works well from day-to-day by managing the work of leaders, administrators, teachers and support staff very effectively. Staff selection procedures are developed very well. The 'Hiring Committee' includes contributions by staff from all levels in the school and ensures that any appointed staff fit the school's culture well and are fully committed to its procedures.

**Quality Statement 5: 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 well-developed.**

The school is very good at recognizing and assessing any weaknesses in its performance accurately and at responding to eliminate the identified weaknesses. The school commits time and resources to providing additional after-school classes to support students' learning, based on careful analysis of their progress and needs. The requirements of special education students are also assessed carefully and great care is taken to ensure that planned learning is matched well to their needs. These students are supported well in classes by teachers and by para-professionals. Class reviews are a very effective part of the school's work in which the progress and learning needs of all students are analyzed closely and plans for improvement are made.

### **Other key observations**

Teachers support students' personal, social and emotional development very well. This enables students to become increasingly confident and competent learners. This is very true of the youngest students who rapidly become independent, sustaining their interest and enthusiasm well. Consequently, students are happy at school and feel cared for and valued. The trend of increasing independence in learning continues as students become older. Students are very willing to discuss their work and contribute effectively to discussions. They work together very productively in groups.

Parents and guardians are very supportive and raise substantial amounts of money to supplement the school's resources and to support students' learning. Parents and guardians feel the school is good. Communications with parents and guardians and the information provided for them is of the highest quality. Parent/teacher meetings are held frequently. Frequent 'Coffee with Carol' (the principal) meetings are held in which parents and guardians can ask questions and express their views. These meetings are very well attended and are led charismatically and very professionally by the principal.

## Jesse Isador Straus School

### Part 4: Evaluation Criteria Grade Summary

<b>Quality Statement 1: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor and facilitate the student's progress over time.</b>	o	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data (e.g., diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments, students work products, standards-based portfolios, attendance, descriptive review, security data, etc.) and generates its own to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of how well each student, classroom, grade level, and other important categories of students and the school are: (1) currently performing, and (2) progressing over time, on English language arts, mathematics, and other important academic subjects. Criteria for measuring student progress are "objective" when they are <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• standards-based,</li> <li>• consistent across students,</li> <li>• capable of revealing progress or a lack of it over time and ways to close the gap between current and expected practice,</li> </ul> and when they allow <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the performance of different students to be compared, and</li> <li>• learning activity to be broken down into component parts so strengths and weaknesses on each sub-activity may be identified.</li> </ul>			X
1.2 The school makes effective use of the data to assess the performance and progress of students by racial and ethnic groups, English language learners and special education students, and all other categories of interest to the school.  {This criterion and the next are partially aspirational as of now. City and State Report Cards and Division of Accountability and Assessment reports provide only some of the necessary data. The NYC DOE will soon provide schools with fuller access to better data.}			X
1.3 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, racial and ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.			X
<b>Quality Statement 2: 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.</b>	o	✓	+
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 it develops 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 warranting attention.			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. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. That information is central to setting reasonably 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
<b>Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.</b>	o	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with the school's high expectations and improvement plans and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals.			X
3.2 Decisions about the use of teacher and student time are based on the organization of the day and week needed to inform teachers about each student's performance and next learning steps, set goals and plans for improved student learning, and implement and continuously improve plans for reaching stated goals.			X
3.3 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X

## Jesse Isador Straus School

3.4 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.5 Teachers are accountable for student outcomes. 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
3.6 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
3.7 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
3.8 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.9 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X

<b>Quality Statement 4: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>
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 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 Leaders, faculty, and staff share the same goals and frequently evaluate themselves, their interventions and each other's plans and interventions, including, when possible, by comparing outcomes across classrooms and schools. The school monitors its performance and tackles weaknesses. Even in areas where the school is successful, leadership is not complacent, but aims to improve further. The goal in all cases is to improve student and school performance and progress.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results and revision of plans takes place in teams.			X
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear and are generally followed.			X

<b>Quality Statement 5: 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.</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>
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 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 interim 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 each successive phase of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve students' academic outcomes.			X