



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Lt. Joseph Petrosino School

Public School 70

3045 42 Street

Queens

New York 11103

Principal: Donna Geller

Dates of review: May 30 – June 1, 2007

Reviewer: Stephanie Krusa

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Lt Joseph Petrosino School serves 1,139 students from pre kindergarten through 5th grades. Hispanic children make up 44% of the student body, 33% are White, almost 22% are Asians and the remaining 2% are Black. More than two-thirds of this year's students are English language learners, an 18% increase from last year for this group. Most newly enrolled second language students have arrived from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Mexico.

There are self-contained English as second language classes at kindergarten, and in grades 1, 3 and 4, with two in the 2nd grade. In addition, there is one Spanish bilingual class, in both kindergarten and 1st grade. Approximately 9% of enrolled students are special education students, with 4% of these in self-contained classes in grades 2 and 5. The remaining 5% of special education students are in collaborative team teaching classrooms in kindergarten and 1st grades, or are in general education classes and receive support from resource room specialists. There are top classes in grades 1 through 5.

Classes are housed in the main building, a mini school and two transportable units, which are all adjacent. School attendance is 94.6%, which is 2.5% above that of similar schools and 1.8% above City schools. This is a Title 1 school with almost 82% of the students being eligible, slightly less than similar schools but almost 10% above the City school average.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides excellent leadership and has built a highly effective learning community.
- The staff holds high expectations for all students and provides targeted learning experiences that challenge and enhance learning.
- The collegial staff shares best practices and actively engages in professional development.
- The school staff nurtures the academic, social and emotional dimensions of each student.
- The principal and administrative team lead staff in effectively using data on student performance to drive decision-making at all levels.
- The school is welcoming and very well organized with systems in place to provide a clear focus on learning.
- There is a coherent data-driven plan in place for students needing additional support.
- Parents express enthusiasm for the school's academic program and endorse the level of communication between home and school.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that plans and programs to support student achievement are having the intended impact with groups whose progress is not on par with the school, overall.
- Continue to reflect on data with staff to strengthen understanding of patterns, trends and anomalies for more effective goal setting and planning.
- Build on access to technology to strengthen differentiation of instruction and assessment, particularly for students with special needs and English language learners.
- Continue to access time for in-house collegial sharing and for intervisitations with teachers from other exemplary schools to uniformly strengthen staff use of data.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

The Lt Joseph Petrosino Magnet School for the Arts provides a rigorous curriculum which skillfully integrates fine and performing arts disciplines. Because of consistent high performance on annual assessments, the school is exempt from City curriculum mandates. However, the principal and staff have developed a challenging course of study that not only aligns with City and State standards but also embeds additional assessments to carefully track ongoing progress for classes, groups and individual students.

Formal and informal data are effectively analyzed by the administrative team to set long and short-term goals, plan instruction, determine class makeup and match students with teachers for optimum learning. Teachers are continually improving differentiated instruction through in-house collegial sharing and professional development with university and professional partners. School plans are effectively revised every year to match data results, and to fold in new best practices.

The school staff is stable and high functioning as evidenced by students' scores which have improved consistently over the four years of the principal's tenure. Two years ago the school received a New York State Closing the Achievement Gap School award, and the principal is closely monitoring the progress of the large influx of new second language learners so that recent momentum is maintained for this cohort. Though the achievement gap for this cohort continues to diminish, the gap between special education and general education students is not closing as quickly and is a concern.

The school has high expectations for students and fosters a mutually respectful relationship and open communication with parents and community members. Ongoing partnerships include Columbia University's Teachers College, Bank Street College, Hunter College, The Bronx Zoo Environmental Center, Cornell University and Bryant High School.

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 principal and administrative team use student performance data very effectively to drive decision-making. Every child is carefully assessed, with key information centrally collected on grade level tracking reports developed by the school. These list concepts and goals for all reading, writing and mathematics units, which are aligned with City and State standards. Tracking reports are used to group students for instruction and determine overall progress on each grade, for specific groups of students, classrooms and individual children, throughout the year. For example, in response to a recent surge in their numbers, tracking report information for second language learners is further disaggregated by such categories as ethnicity, years in school and first language. Current data indicate strong gains for this cohort. Although most staff effectively compare student in-house and

formal assessment data, not every teacher is highly skilled in this practice. However, the staff has opportunities to share this expertise during grade and faculty meetings when student progress is carefully considered in each content area for the school, across grades and for groups and individuals to measure progress and pinpoint areas of concern. Longitudinal data is also reviewed internally and compared to similar schools, and citywide, to gauge the success of the school's academic program, which has been favorably reflected in the annual performance reports for the past several years.

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 well developed.

Student achievement is very closely monitored by the administrative team. Long-range goals align with the Comprehensive Education Plan and proactively frame high expectations for anticipated progress for the school, for each grade, every group and each child. Interim goals, used to assess short-term progress, are frequently revised based on careful analysis of the most recent data. This is generated by a comprehensive range of teacher-designed assessments. New goals guide revision of the instructional program. Each content area aligns with the State's curriculum scope and sequence. There is a coherent data-driven plan in place for students needing additional support and providers work well with teachers to enhance teaching and learning. Even so, a persistent achievement gap for some special education students indicates that data patterns and anomalies are not yet sufficiently understood to be certain that interventions are having the intended impact.

Particular attention is given to classroom placement for every student to assure that each room has a compatible mix of students, and that the dynamics between teachers and students successfully nurture learning for every child. For example, a new special education enrollee, who was not settling in and showing progress after a month, was placed in another classroom in October to better match him with a particular teacher's style. The student responded and has since shown continual improvement toward social and academic goals set for him in the fall.

The staff holds high expectations for all students, as seen in proactively set goals for individuals and groups. Students' achievement is regularly acknowledged and celebrated in public presentations, performances and exhibitions. Teachers work very effectively with parents, who express considerable enthusiasm for the school's academic program and the progress their children are making. Parents also endorse the level of communication between home and school, particularly regarding the curriculum and key assessments, which enables them to actively support learning at home. All constituents, including university partners, work collaboratively to improve student performance.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

Public School 70 is a federal magnet school for the arts. It is also on the City’s list of high performing schools, exempting it from the Department of Education’s mandated curriculum. Even so, the principal and staff have skillfully developed a course of study for each discipline which incorporates key components of the mandated curriculum, along with new elements which deepen and enrich instruction. For example, students at each grade participate in the performing arts dance program, culminating in authentic presentations.

Close supervision by the administrative team ensures that teachers are accountable for their students. While most teachers are skilled at differentiating instruction to target specific needs of students, not all are yet sufficiently experienced to meet the needs of some learners. The school makes very good use of funds. Every classroom is very well stocked with books, mathematics manipulatives, arts materials and supplies. A comprehensive range of remedial programs has been purchased to support students who are not progressing as anticipated, and these are being used to address their needs with targeted instruction and follow-up assessments. Even so, there is limited use of technology in some self-contained classrooms. This is reflected in a diminishing, though lingering, achievement gap between general and special education students.

Staffing and scheduling decisions are very carefully considered and reflect needs identified through data analysis. For example, when fifth grade scores slipped two years ago, the principal analyzed student needs and revamped teacher assignments for the grade. Last year’s fifth grade scores rebounded. The school staff nurtures the academic, social and emotional dimensions of each student and teachers are readily available to support students with concerns. Students enjoy school, are motivated by the challenging curriculum and explain how current studies will help them succeed in middle and high school. Attendance has been stable at 94.6%, which is above that of similar and City schools. The attendance committee oversees follow up for students whose attendance and punctuality are a concern with immediate phone contact, follow up meetings and home visits. In addition, every staff person plays a part in supporting excellent attendance by conscientiously maintaining excellent relationships with students and families.

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 well developed.

The principal seeks teachers who can best contribute to the school culture in terms of expertise, attitude and experience. Applicants must value the school’s diverse student population and firmly believe that all students can achieve. New and experienced teachers are expected to use data to define student needs and to continually seek new and effective differentiation strategies. All staff members also participate in ongoing planning and revision to define what is working well and improve upon areas that are not sufficiently developed.

The professional development committee, comprised of the cabinet, coaches and teacher leaders, reviews ongoing data and student work to design in-house mentoring

assignments, plan grade-level meetings and recommend off-site trainings for staff. The principal visits classrooms daily, modeling lessons, making formal and informal observations, and identifying those who are ready mentor their peers. One mentoring strategy involves taping exemplary lessons for presentation during grade level and faculty meetings. The presenting teacher also presents an overview of key planning and assessment elements for fellow teachers. The school's video archive of model lessons from the past four years is a valuable resource, used to pinpoint the needs of new staff. Additionally, teachers attend regional trainings and workshops with university partners such as Teachers College, St John's University and Hunter College. Teachers routinely write reflections about attended workshops and present these to peers at grade level meetings. These reflections also serve as an archived resource for staff. Even though there is an established professional development program, teachers expressed the need for more time to visit and learn from each other.

The highly respected principal has built an effective learning community and provided excellent leadership in managing new initiatives, resulting in continuous improvement of student scores. The school is welcoming and very well organized with systems in place which enable staff to maintain a clear focus on learning. The school successfully focuses on social and emotional development. For example, the new pre kindergarten class was identified as a successful social and emotional environment for preschoolers by Bank Street College. In addition, the school has established partnerships with New York Cares, Queens College, Cornell University and the MacDonald's Corporation to enhance its youth development programs and further support learning.

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 well developed.

The Comprehensive Education Plan is used throughout the year to monitor and assess progress of the school's programs. The staff systematically checks long-term goals and interim benchmarks against learning to flexibly adjust them and revise instructional plans. This regular and frequent process is used to scaffold and enhance student learning as data warrants.

Students' results are compared in classrooms, across grades and with other schools to judge the school's standing, make decisions about the effectiveness of interventions and programs, and realign planning with most recent data. Even so, not all staff are equally skilled in analyzing data for effective planning. As an academic year closes, all relevant data is thoroughly reviewed by staff to determine overall progress, and inform planning as writing begins for the coming year's Comprehensive Education Plan.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Lt Joseph Petrosino School (PS 70)	∅	✓	+
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