

**Catherine And Count Basie Junior High School**

**Catherine and Count Basie School**

**Junior High School 072**

**133-25 Guy R Brewer Boulevard,  
Queens  
NY, 11206**

**Principal: Chandra Williams**

**Dates of review: June 1 - 2, 2006**

**Reviewer: Penny Holden  
Cambridge Education**

# Catherine And Count Basie Junior High 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**

# Catherine And Count Basie Junior High School

## Part 1: The School Context

### Information about the school

The Catherine and Count Basie Middle School 72 is a Junior High School grades 6 – 9 that reopened in September 2005 having been completely restructured after seven years in corrective action. There are now 4 small learning academies. The Academy of Exploration and Discovery (grade 6 only), The Academy of Mathematics, Science and Technology, The International Academy of Law and Justice and The Gifted and Talented Academy. There are 869 students. As many as half the students are placed in some type of foster care. 64% of students qualify for free lunches. 82 students have recognized special educational needs and 40 qualify for support with their English language skills. Students come from a range of ethnic and racial backgrounds; white 14.1%, black 33.2%, Hispanic 39.6%, and 13.2% are Asian and other. The most recent arrivals come mainly from Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago.

# Catherine And Count Basie Junior High School

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Determined leadership has reorganized and turned the school around, to offer students a better deal.
- Less than a year old, the new Catherine and Count Basie School is providing a safe, yet demanding, learning environment.
- The strong team of the Principal and the Assistant Principals has an accurate and honest view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, including the quality of classroom teaching.
- Leadership is not restricted to the senior team; it is distributed to many teachers and adults in the school who feel empowered to play a full part in improving the school,
- The success of the changes made to the school, reflect the enthusiasm and dedication of many highly energetic and motivated staff.
- Students feel well supported but challenged by their teachers: "In my elementary school as long as I finished the work, that was OK – here the teacher goes through it and expects me to get it right and do it well".
- Some teachers use excellent instruction techniques that take into account students' learning styles and build on what they know and understand.
- The vast majority of students buy into the Catherine and Count Basie School mission and culture, including some who do not find it easy to follow rules.
- Students value the opportunities they get for extra curricular activity and for visits outside school.

### What the school needs to improve

- Implement, monitor, evaluate and adjust the new curriculum maps to ensure they meet the needs of the students well.
- Continue to work vigilantly to improve the instructional techniques of teachers who do not meet the needs of their students as well as the best teachers in the school.
- Use the model of data analysis, currently being used to target provision for students who have special educational needs, with other groups of students.
- Provide professional development so that teachers understand how they can use data to assess the progress of individuals and groups of students and then provide well directed support.
- Continue to consolidate the very positive changes made towards Catherine and Count Basie School in order to become a highly successful and productive learning environment.

# Catherine And Count Basie Junior High School

## Part 3: Main Findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a proficient school overall.**

It has aspects that are well-developed and others that need improvement. The school has existed in its current form and structure only since September of this academic year. It has had a long history of under-performance before this. The Principal started at the school in September of the previous year and was given the task of reorganization and regeneration on arrival.

#### **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 proficient.**

This area of the school's work is proficient overall, taking into account that it has not yet had a year to develop and try out processes and structures. The school in this form is working to reverse many years of under-performance. It is very aware that there are many issues it has to fully develop and the leadership team has a passionate desire to be outstanding.

The four academies have clear criteria for admissions and regular work grades. Evidence from student portfolios, alongside behavior and attendance figures, is used formatively to check that students are making sufficient progress and to identify any attitude difficulties or other barriers to learning. This careful monitoring often has an enormous and positive impact on individual pupils. As one student said, "My teacher told me I was going nowhere – it was a great reality check and I decided to focus and follow her advice". Examination of this student's work demonstrates the difference in the quality of what she has produced since she received the advice.

The monitoring of academic subjects is regular and includes the use of standardized tests, (Princeton Review) as well as class grades. Each semester students receive a progress report covering academic progress. These act as an early warning if students are in danger of not being promoted to the next grade and allow teachers and parents to rectify matters.

Criteria for measuring student progress are a mixture of objective standardized, and teacher set assessments. Variation between the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of individual's instruction has a bearing on the standards different teachers set and ultimately achieve with their students. The curriculum maps that have been recently completed have improved this situation, as each unit of study has a planned, agreed assessment task. This can improve the consistency of level across students when they are taught by different teachers. It will also enable senior leaders to better check progress or a lack of it over time and to identify the variation from class to class.

## Catherine And Count Basie Junior High School

At the moment the performance of different students is not compared to any great degree and this is an aspect the school is very keen to develop.

**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 proficient.**

The school uses formative assessment information and assignment marks regularly to manage students' progress and to intervene where necessary and there are examples of students doing well. The Assistant Principals play an important role in leading this work in each of their academies.

School leaders and many teachers are keen to engage in using data to set demanding, objectively measurable, goals for immediate and long-range improvement. However, even without this, the school has challenging goals and clear plans that focus on the school, individual students, as well as groups of students and on improving performance. What the school lacks is the understanding of how to focus these strategies even more precisely with the intelligent use of data.

One example of good use of data is the analysis of test results for pupils with special educational needs. This has enabled the school not only to target particular individuals who are falling behind but to group students together in more homogenous groups regardless of year group. This regrouping will allow teachers to pitch work at a level that is much closer to student need. The school will monitor the effect of these regroupings next academic year to check impact on student performance.

All the literature that the school sends to parents and students conveys the school's high expectations. Students and parents were very articulate about this. Students reported how the school "challenges you to be a better person, makes you mature and pushes you to do well". Some parents welcome the regular information about their child's performance. Comments were made by a parent about the good communication between the school and parents and how this is valued. There was a disappointment expressed by both the school leaders and some parents about the difficulty of engaging all parents as much as they would like in school and in education.

There is a strong drive in the school at all levels to improve student performance and progress, although some adults have still to realize what a difference each teacher makes, rather than what the student brings in terms of capability and attitude.

**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 proficient**

The school has selected the four learning academies well as they enable the development of a curriculum based on the school's high expectations and plans for improvement. Development work on the curriculum has finished its first stage and when completed will

## Catherine And Count Basie Junior High School

have the capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals. This is an outstanding project that has used the skills and expertise of six teachers representing each academy in the school. These teachers have devised, with cooperation from the different subjects and academies, curriculum maps for Math, ELA, science and social studies. These curriculum maps are an example of strategic planning and cooperative work that has been led by classroom teachers rather than senior managers. These maps begin the important process of developing an academic curriculum that can better respond to individual students' learning needs. Rather than concentrating on devising a curriculum, teachers can now plan how to differentiate the work to meet students' learning and academic needs more accurately.

Decisions about the use of teacher and student time are based on the organization of the daily and weekly schedules. These 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.

Where possible, staffing decisions are driven by the needs that emerge from examining the available student data and by skilled observation of instructional methods of teachers. It is important to remember that this school has been in 7 years of ineffective corrective action before this reorganization and that teachers are generally the same people. Many teachers have embraced the new focus of raising student achievement and are keen to try new ideas that others do not find so easy. New staff are chosen with the aim that they can significantly contribute to improving student outcomes

Budgeting decisions are driven by the need to improve students' standards. New class libraries and improved school facilities have all been developed with the goal of school improvement and raising achievement. With less than a year in existence the reorganized school can have little meaningful data yet to check the impact of the changes it has made.

The leaders in the school and many teachers understand that teachers are accountable for student outcomes. However, this is a difficult notion for some teachers who have been part of the long history of underperformance. The Principal and Assistant Principals frequently observe classroom teaching and have a very good understanding of how to judge effectiveness. There are realistic strategies for improving the quality of teacher's instruction. Some teachers, who when observed are very skilful, wish to do even better and the school values and supports this drive for yet further improvement. Teachers do observe and support each other's classroom instruction in order to improve teaching and thus student outcomes.

Staff knows their students very well and this is enhanced by the small learning academies. The personal attention that teachers are able to give to students' academic and personal needs in these circumstances means that they can maximize their effect. Students were fervent about the fact that their teachers treated them with respect, knew them well and expected more from them than teachers in previous schools. Student attendance, tardiness and involvement in school life are given a high focus and monitored in each academy. Good attendance and adherence to uniform rules, for example trigger rewards much enjoyed by students. Any absences set off immediate intervention.

The vast majority of instructional programs actively engages students, who state how much they enjoy school or at least value what it offers them.

The school works well with outside bodies to achieve academic goals and to provide an interesting and rich learning experience.

## Catherine And Count Basie Junior High School

**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 proficient**

In the short time the Principal has been at the school; under two years, with only 7 months with this organization; enormous progress has been made. The Principal has rightly gained the respect of staff and parents alike. She has established an outstanding leadership team who are in total agreement with her about the need for change, the focus on student achievement and the measures that must be taken. The Principal has not shirked the harder issues of tackling those who not agree with her philosophy or the need for change. She has the interests of the students firmly in the forefront of her mind. The capacity for improvement is excellent.

The school runs smoothly on a day to day basis as procedures are clear and generally followed.

When vacancies arise, leaders, teacher and other staff are selected on their high expectations for student performance and their commitment to improving performance and progress.

Professional development has been very important in reorganizing and establishing the new school and the learning academies. A very effective program has been designed to help staff to improve school and student outcomes. Professional development opportunity to improve the use of data has been an area of great disappointment to the school. They have made very active attempts to book professional development in the analysis and evaluation of data and have found a dearth of courses. This is still being pursued.

A climate of continual improvement, self reflection and evaluation is encouraged. Leaders, teachers and other staff generally share the same goals and evaluate their effectiveness by comparing outcomes across classrooms and schools, albeit using limited information.

The school is monitoring its performance through a range of measures and is passionate about tackling weaknesses where these affect students. There is no complacency among the school leaders who aim to improve further and who set high goals for themselves.

**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 proficient.**

The limited time since reopening means that it is not possible to comment on the school's use of long term school plans.

It is clear that school leaders are: effective agents of change; strive for improvement; are focused on student outcomes and are utterly self-critical. There are clear goals for

## Catherine And Count Basie Junior High School

development but there has not been enough time to judge how interim and objectively measurable ways are used to check whether plans are reaching stated goals. The implementation of the curriculum maps will give the school good opportunity to evaluate effectiveness.

The school has a clear objective to use comparisons of students' progress within and across classrooms to make interim diagnostic assessments and the work begun with special needs students is a good first step.

Information, albeit still rather underdeveloped and therefore partially subjective or un-standardized, is generated by interim assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and is used to identify where changes need to be made. Again interim and final goals have been modified when data shows that revision is required but the short period the school has existed means this is understandably, work in progress.

It is a fundamental conviction held by school leaders and most teachers that all plans must be driven by the desire and need to improve students' academic outcomes.

### **Other key observations**

The school has just begun its journey to improve the educational experience of the students and to be a centre of excellence. It has made some important steps but recognises that it still has some way to go.

# Catherine And Count Basie Junior High 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	✓	+
<p>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:</p> <p>(1) currently performing, and (2) progressing over time, on English Language Arts, mathematics, and other important academic subjects.</p> <p>Criteria for measuring student progress are "objective" when they are</p> <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> <p>and when they allow</p> <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	
<p>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.</p> <p>{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.}</p>	X		
<p>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.</p>	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	✓	+
<p>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.</p>		X	
<p>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.</p>		X	
<p>2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.</p>		X	
<p>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.</p>	X		
<p>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</p>		X	

## Catherine And Count Basie Junior High School

<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	
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>	0	✓	+
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

## Catherine And Count Basie Junior High School

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.	o	✓	+
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		