



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Juniper Valley School

Public School 128

**69 - 26 65 Drive
Queens
NY 11379**

Principal: John Lavelle

Dates of review: April 30 - May 1, 2007

Reviewer: Corinne Brown

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 Juniper Valley School, Public School 128, is an elementary school located in the Middle Village area of Queens. It serves a student population of 391 in kindergarten through fifth grade. Of these, approximately 16% are special education students and approximately 4% are English language learners. The majority of the students, at 80.3% are of White background, with Hispanic background students, at 13.3%, forming the next largest group. The rest of the students are of Asian (6.1%) and Black (0.3%) backgrounds.

The attendance rate, consistently at over 94%, is higher than in similar and City schools. With 20% eligibility, the school does not receive Title 1 funding.

The school population is split almost equally between the main building and an annex, one city block away. This year, the main building contains grades kindergarten through 2nd grade and the annex, which is a converted factory building, contains grades 3 through 5. Neither building contains an auditorium, a gymnasium or any other specialized room so multiple use is made of the cafeteria and a room in the annex.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal leads with vision, compassion and a calm attitude.
- High expectations for all are visible throughout the school in the climate for learning and positive attitudes of the staff.
- Attendance is excellent with clear strategies in place to address any issues that arise quickly.
- All stakeholders share the mission to achieve success through a nurturing, academically rich program.
- Dedicated teachers know their students well and collaboratively plan engaging instruction, knowing they have full parental support.
- The school uses data well to set whole school goals and guide its professional development planning.
- The school seeks stimulating, interactive and productive ways to enrich the curriculum and to broaden student experience.
- A culture of respect permeates the school.
- The school has established consistency of practice whilst encouraging individual teacher expertise and style.
- The school works hard to address the identified needs of all students, including the higher achievers.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure the process for monitoring and evaluating progress towards all goals, both whole school and individual student, is fully formalized by identifying benchmarks that will demonstrate progress within agreed timeframes.
- Further develop differentiated activities to meet the different needs of all students.
- Build upon already good practice by mapping cross-curricular links.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

Juniper Valley School, Public School 128, is an environment of calm, purposeful engagement where student self-esteem is enhanced, their interests are encouraged and students flourish. The inspiring principal sets the tone and is the driving force in both buildings, with his calm manner, enquiring mind and respect for all. Students are known individually, as well as their families and they feel happy in the positive climate of this small school. The school sets high expectations and provides a rich curriculum and enrichment activities that build on student strengths and provide greater opportunities for success. Data is used rigorously yet sensitively to monitor performance and to inform instructional practice. Collaboration underpins the work at this school, between staff and amongst students, so that mutual support builds on strengths and encourages risk-taking and innovation. Excellent use is made of technology as a research and presentation tool, to motivate students and forge curriculum links whilst building skills.

The school is fortunate to have an energetic parent coordinator, who is a fully participating cabinet member and who supports the already committed parents to be even better informed and involved. Many parents are now learning leaders in the school. Focus and team work by all means that student outcomes are outstanding through collaborative planning for instruction; however the school is not complacent and continually seeks to refine the quality of education it provides.

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, cabinet and academic intervention team maintain a close and regular overview of school performance over time and by comparison with other similar local schools, using both hard and soft data to generate realistic pictures. Data is derived from State and City tests and other standardized tests, as well as assessments devised by teachers to check progress or achievement. This school is especially adept at supplementing hard data from formal tests and assessments with data generated regularly in the classroom and other areas of the school. It regularly uses such information to gain a clear understanding of trends and patterns of progress for individual students and classes. The small size of the school means that comparison by grade level and by identified groups, such as English language learners and special education students, is embedded and is continuous practice. Data from student performance is directly linked to the planning of whole school goals and guides the professional development that occurs in the school.

While the school is mindful of the various group and subgroup performance in its student population, such as that by gender, it exercises a considered and homogeneous policy of inclusion and integration. To this end, for example, exposure to exciting and challenging

mathematics and science instruction has resulted in exceptional student outcomes for both boys and girls, as well as for special education students and higher achievers.

Data is a living tool in this school where teachers are empowered and trusted by the principal, so that they update and review progress by individual and class on a daily basis. Thorough analysis of student work and test results means the skilled teachers efficiently identify skill deficiencies or other student weaknesses and so take swift, appropriate action to correct this in all subjects. Grade teams meet regularly both formally and informally to share information with input from specialists such as English language learner and academic support staff. This means that timely interventions are planned and monitored sensitively, based on thorough knowledge of the individual, including their personal and social development. Using data, the school works in a positive and encouraging way with all students to increase self-esteem and tailor instruction, which results in considerably improved individual outcomes.

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.

This school has built a cohesive and committed staff team who work enthusiastically as part of the whole school team, as well as in the small grade groupings. Collaboration is encouraged during grade and monthly faculty meetings as well as during break and lunch times. The staff are intrinsically involved in the formation and implementation of whole school goals and the ongoing monitoring. The school works rigorously to identify and address the needs of all students, including higher achievers. Staff work diligently in their teams to plan and evaluate instruction that takes account of different groupings and needs. Curriculum compacting is one method introduced to accommodate higher achievers. The school has a comprehensive set of goals for the entire school and for individual students. Evaluation of progress through pacing calendars in grade conferences enables realignment of instruction as required. The school is aware of the need to identify steps and timeframes to formalize this monitoring process.

The nurturing environment of this small school means that recognition of changing individual need is ongoing, so plans for groups, classes and individuals are flexibly adapted. There are sound data-based systems in place to identify and monitor all student needs across the school. This is complemented by careful observation of non-verbal student behavior by all staff, including the principal. Integration and systematic programs to support students with special needs are very effective. For example, good intervention has led to many students being decertified, and who now achieve academic success equivalent to their peers.

Students are motivated and engaged by interesting instruction, wide opportunities for exploring interests and developing skills and talented staff who care for them. Parents and students share the high expectations that are visible throughout the school in the climate for learning and positive attitudes of the staff. Parents feel involved in the learning partnership, welcomed in the school and are fully involved in monitoring and assisting their child’s progress. Several parents have become learning leaders and are active in classrooms. The school feels highly fortunate in having the support of so many of its parents and parents, in their turn, “Can’t say enough how happy we are”.

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.

Although not mandated to do so, the school has adopted the Teachers’ College model of instruction in line with its Region. However this is creatively modified and adapted to better reflect the school’s unique character. Teachers are accountable and empowered to personalize the program within its framework. They work in teams to accommodate their student profiles and their own instructional style. All programs are aligned with standards and firmly rooted in student data. Literacy is a strong focus area throughout the school, so class libraries contain a variety of books with scientific or mathematical content. Staff are dedicated, creative and consider their students’ needs very well as they plan collaboratively to deliver engaging instruction. They are fully supported in their work by parents. Data gathered from students and staff, through surveys and personal contact, results in a rich mixture of enrichment clusters that include tap dancing, violin instruction and creative iMovie projects. The school continually seeks new ways to bring learning to life and to engender success through celebration of different strengths. One significant example is the regular visit by the Museum of Natural History mobile to the school, which precedes a whole day trip to the Queens Hall of Science or the Hayden Planetarium by the whole school. Active learning highly engages students and test results demonstrate excellent impact.

Excellent interdisciplinary collaboration is a strand that runs throughout the school, such as in the motivational work in art and technology instruction that engages students and builds skills in content areas. This means that concepts are reinforced and topics extended with individualized instruction also taking place. The school recognizes the need to build on this good practice by formally mapping cross-curricular links and further developing differentiated activities to meet the different needs of all students.

The school manages its budget carefully and with student need in mind. For example, the school is well resourced and creative use is made of the limited available space. Data is used in a supportive and constructive way to inform scheduling and staffing decisions, as demonstrated through the hiring of a guidance counselor to maintain and enhance student self-esteem. The counselor is a fully involved, whole school team member and has had a significant impact on student outcomes.

Students feel very secure in the school, are articulate and know they are respected and their opinions valued. Attendance is consistently high, as all students want to take part in the nurturing, academically rich program and there are rigorous systems to maintain this.

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 inspires with his vision, compassion and a calm attitude. He has built a school community that shares his mission to achieve success for each child. Staff selection and deployment is strategic, so personal qualities together with content expertise are considered in the appointment process. Parents and teachers are part of the selection team. The principal knows his staff very well and flexibly deploys them to meet student need, build on strengths and school cohesion. A teacher comment, “He wants us to be

nurturing, so he nurtures us”, demonstrates the culture of the school, but also indicates the level of ongoing professional development that occurs. There is formal professional development aligned with whole school goals, but the collaborative team work means that good practice is freely shared. Visitations to other schools are frequent to explore further ways to improve instruction in this reflective school.

Within daily visits to classrooms the principal models good practice and further builds capacity. The small group of substitute teachers also knows the students well and are included in development sessions. Teachers willingly share ideas and support each other during team meetings as they seek stimulating, interactive and productive ways to enrich the curriculum and broaden student experience. The open and respectful culture that pervades the school underpins its success, with all community members including parents feeling valued and working for the students.

The school atmosphere is of calm, purposeful engagement, where everything runs smoothly, despite the challenge of two sites. The school has established an ever-expanding enrichment program, with partners also adding to student opportunities for success, such as through visiting expert speakers and links with local assisted living facilities.

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.

As the school looks forward to expanding and its new building, it is mindful of the need to preserve its special, unique qualities. The teamwork that occurs among all stakeholders means that candid evaluation of progress towards goals is ongoing. The school leadership team is fully involved in devising the Comprehensive Education Plan, as are the teachers. This is a meaningful document, builds on previous plans and is firmly linked to data with clearly identified responsibilities and timescales. The principal’s performance review is equally a working blueprint that drives the school forwards. There is year-on-year development in these objective plans, with inbuilt flexibility and response to change. The identification of smaller interim benchmarks that demonstrate progress within agreed timeframes is only partially achieved as it is not yet formalized.

The school is very adept at measuring its progress through the use both hard and soft data. Comparisons of progress for the whole school, classes and content areas are systematic and compared with similar schools. For example, comparison between fall and spring results is used to fine tune instruction on a grade-wide, class-wide and individual level. The school extends students horizons as thinkers through carefully structured instruction and imaginative ways to demonstrate their understanding. It has more parental support and involvement than many schools, which reflects the recognition that this unique small school offers a rich curriculum with diverse opportunities to experience success to all students.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Juniper Valley School (PS 128)	∅	✓	+
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