



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

John Philip Sousa Middle School

Middle School 142

**3750 Baychester Avenue
Bronx
NY 10466**

Principal: Alan H Borer

Dates of review: May 11, 14 - 15, 2007

Reviewer: Joy Richardson

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The principal is in his third year at the school, which has been restructured into four themed academies: Business, Media, Health and Sports. Each occupies one floor of the building and is led by an assistant principal. A total of 1071 students are enrolled, in grades 6 and 7 in the Sports Academy, and in grades 6 through 8 in the remaining three academies. Around 74% of students are Title 1 eligible, which is comparable with similar schools but above the average for City schools. The school population comprises of 71% Black, 24% Hispanic, and 5% of Asian and other students including less than 1% of White students. The school has 20% special education students. About 4% of students, mainly Spanish speakers, are English language learners. The school's attendance rate has risen in the last year to 90%, broadly in line with similar schools though below the average for all City schools.

This is an Empowerment School. Empowerment Schools have more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their school community. Empowerment Schools are free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with, and benefit from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has brought stability to the school, investing it with a spirit of optimism and a sense of what is possible.
- The new academy structure is being implemented well and providing an effective framework for developing the school further.
- The school has very effective procedures to accelerate the progress of those students most in need of improvement.
- A comprehensive system is being developed for tracking students' progress over time.
- The school is very successful in harnessing the support of outside bodies in maximizing opportunities for students.
- The school is raising the sights of students, including the most capable students, in pursuit of higher achievement.
- Much is being done to develop the quality of instruction, including the use of technology, in order to improve learning.
- The positive management of students' behavior, with concern for their well-being, creates a good climate for learning.
- The principal encourages, motivates and inspires the whole school community in pursuit of improvement.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen academic leadership in each academy to ensure that the achievement of each student is closely monitored.
- Develop the use of data by all teachers to quantify progress, establish the effectiveness of instruction and make adjustments to curriculum programs.
- Extend the scope of strategic planning by setting out the actions needed to reach clearly defined goals and regularly measuring the impact of these actions on students' progress.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The school has improved dramatically in recent years under the leadership of the current principal. Staff, students and parents speak of a positive transformation in the tone of the school, from confusion and disorder to stability and purpose. This has been brought about by the principal whose energy, enthusiasm and commitment to students is driving improvement, raising sights and making the school a good place to be.

The restructuring of the school into four academies, each with its own identity, has helped to create a good environment for learning. The school is focusing effectively on improving instruction, accelerating progress and widening opportunity for students. Further strengthening of academic leadership within the academies is required to ensure sustained monitoring of students' achievements.

Teaching does not consistently draw on the use of data to help students learn better. The school recognizes this and has developed a new school-wide system for analyzing data to track students' progress. It is now planning its implementation. The school is intent on developing its strategic planning and involving everyone in this. It has more to do in order to turn ambitious goals into specific plans with interim measures of the progress being made.

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 proficient.

The school is developing ways of collecting and using data to build deeper understanding of students' learning and progress over time. Data is collected from each marking period, and scholarship reports provide an overview of progress at student, classroom and grade level. As an Empowerment School, the Princeton Review periodic assessment program is being used flexibly to help teachers gain insights, at regular intervals, into specific aspects of student's learning. Quarterly exams and tests compiled by teachers help to fill out the picture of how well students are doing.

The progress of special education students is very closely tracked, providing an example of the effective use of data to accelerate learning. The progress and performance of ethnic groups and English language learners are monitored. The school uses data well in other categories of interest and is alert to factors affecting students' performance, such as the need for glasses.

Teachers collect a large quantity of useful data on students' work. Some make purposeful use of it to pinpoint weaknesses in learning, although this varies between teachers. On occasions, assistant principals identify differences between classes in the progress made

by students, and work with teachers to address problems. The school is concerned to develop a more manageable system to help the administration and individual teachers in using data more consistently, incisively and productively. To this end, it is introducing an online system for collecting and analyzing data that can show the progress of students in each homeroom, or by subject or other category. The format developed by the school provides clear visual mapping of levels of performance and progress over time. Training is planned to help teachers in using, questioning and interpreting this data to guide their teaching. The school measures progress in comparison with similar schools and its own past performance. The school is working towards developing a finer filter to provide greater detail in order better to inform planning.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student’s next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student’s learning.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The school sets goals for long-range improvement, including, for example, a 5% increase of students at level 2 or above. It is not yet fully matching its goals with the means of achieving them by developing plans and timeframes that hold everyone accountable for accelerating students’ learning at the desired rate.

The school is formulating plans to strengthen academic leadership within the academies to give sustained oversight of each student’s progress towards reaching the desired goals. Teachers are involved in collaborative planning within academies and in ‘quadrant’ meetings for subjects across the school. These meetings facilitate consideration of what works and what can be improved in teaching practice, though plans are not yet strongly informed by the use of data. Particular attention is given to those students most in need of improvement and the school’s work in this area is highly effective. Students flourish in self-contained classes, growing in confidence as they experience success. The Saturday program is well attended and is proving very effective in helping low performing students to close the gap.

The school is raising the sights of students. Teachers, students and parents express the view that the school ‘is on the move’ and that expectations are rising. The school works closely with parents and caregivers, and reaches out to involve them in helping students to succeed in learning. Concern to improve student performance runs across the whole school community and the school is now working to ensure that all aspects of its work are clearly and purposefully directed to this end.

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

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The school ensures that students follow a curriculum in each academy that fulfils mandated requirements. At the same time, each academy theme is developed through the choice of content, for example in reading, as well as in the style of instruction, and in opportunities beyond the classroom. Teachers are supported and guided by the school’s leadership in implementing curriculum programs, and in sharing ideas about how to use

these to greatest effect. Scheduling decisions reflect the school's desire to provide a well-rounded program and to maximize opportunities within and beyond the school day. To challenge proficient students further, high school courses in mathematics and science are being introduced, with plans to incorporate these into the program for an increasing number of students. The early morning teaching of Korean offers students an extra opportunity for language learning as well as extending their cultural horizons.

The school has a central focus on improving instruction. For example, the use of questioning to extend understanding has been explored with teachers across the school. Teachers are increasing the use of technology to engage students and to develop students' skills, as demonstrated in students' interesting PowerPoint presentations. In many classes, instruction engages students very effectively so that they learn well. Students are frequently encouraged to participate actively and practically, and to share their ideas with others. This creates a good climate for learning.

Budgeting decisions are driven by the school's identification of students' needs, ensuring, for example, that students in each academy are fully supported by guidance counselors. The school is highly successful in securing funding for its programs and for enrichment such as the 'baby program,' which is currently opening boys' eyes to the realities of looking after a baby.

Staff know students well as individuals. Students are confident that they can turn to a trusted adult in case of need and that teachers are concerned for them. Staff work together to identify needs and to find ways of overcoming problems in students' behavior.

Attendance is given a high priority, and the rate of attendance has risen as a result of good procedures. Absences are followed up promptly, and the school is persistent in attempting to reduce lateness. The effect of absence on the progress of individual students is carefully monitored.

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

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The leadership and faculty share a high level of commitment to students and to raising expectations of performance. Teachers are encouraged to extend their knowledge and skills and they find this inspiring. As one teacher said, 'I came for a job and found a career'.

Professional development is tailored well to teachers' needs, individually, as well as in groups and as a faculty. Scheduling arrangements are made so that teachers can plan together, meeting regularly within and across academies. Coaches in English and mathematics, and an external consultant, work closely with teachers and maintain a school-wide focus to build a consistent quality of instruction.

The principal visits classes regularly, keeping his finger on the pulse of teaching and learning. Formal and informal observations build up an overview of instruction. This identifies where improvement is needed, for example in class management, or in knowledge of subject content. Opportunities for teachers to observe each other are increasing. Training is shortly to be provided for all teachers on the use of a new school-

wide data system, to ensure that everyone is equipped to manage this effectively in pursuit of student improvement.

The principal is highly respected by staff, students and parents. He gives a strong lead while enabling and empowering others. For example, teams have participated in evaluating the school's strengths and areas for improvement. This is feeding into a shared understanding of the school's goals and how to achieve them. The school runs smoothly because of its good communication arrangements and very effective strategies for keeping everyone informed and involved. The school draws widely and purposefully on support services to help in meeting academic goals. It fosters an extensive range of partnerships that raise students' sights and broaden their experience in preparation for high school and later life. For example, students have worked with great enthusiasm on a marketing project with Elizabeth Arden. Funding is sought from many sources to extend opportunities, such as a summer 'honors camp' for students with consistently high scores.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school considers the effectiveness of its plans and interventions and makes adjustments where necessary including flexibly redirecting resources to achieve the required results. Although it has clear goals for students' progress, it has yet to map out the route towards them by setting sufficient interim goals and measures of success and by reviewing these regularly. The school's goals are broadly shared. The school is now working towards a clearer view of the contribution required from each teacher in reaching challenging but achievable targets for students' progress. The administration makes broad comparisons of students' progress within classes and across grades, looking for patterns and trends. The new data system has been designed to facilitate a more rigorous process in following analysis through into action. More extensive and analytical use of information from periodic assessments is being developed. This is beginning to give greater diagnostic insight into strengths and weaknesses in students' learning, and providing a basis for redirecting practice in pursuit of goals for improved student progress.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: John Philip Sousa Middle School (MS 142)	∅	✓	+
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	