



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

James Peter Sinnott Magnet School

Middle School 218

**370 Fountain Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11208**

Principal: Joseph Costa

Dates of review: February 27 - 29, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Mick Megee

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

James P. Sinnott Magnet School is an intermediate school with 852 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 54% Black, 31% Hispanic, 2% White, and 12% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 89.4%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 78% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal, through his very skilful leadership, has articulated his vision of improvement very clearly and has gained the commitment of all his staff.
- The school is outstandingly well managed and consequently students behave very well, make good progress and feel safe.
- Relationships between all members of the school community, including parents and carers, are very strong.
- There is good, differentiated instruction across the school, and all staff have a high expectation of what students will achieve.
- All teachers, and particularly those new to the profession, benefit from the support and professional development that the school provides.
- There is good support for special education students, English language learners and those who are struggling.
- There are effective arrangements for parents and teachers to give and receive information.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop a more comprehensive school system for gathering together all available data and for determining school wide goals and strategies.
- Devise more thorough ways of scrutinizing assessment information to feed into plans and reviews so that the progress of different groups is tracked.
- Improve the goals setting for the different groups of students so that they are based more firmly on past achievement and rates of progress.
- Raise attendance further.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

This happy school is almost ready to fly. The school collects a wealth of information about the performance of students, although there are still some gaps in the information stream that means that the school's goal setting and monitoring are not as effective as they could be. The most important missing element is an analysis of the differential progress made by the different gender and ethnic groups in the school. The administration has not yet pulled all the information together into a single data bank so that common, whole school goals can be easily determined. However, there is some good emergent practice in the key areas of English language arts and math. Senior staff are fired up with infectious enthusiasm about how the school's information is leading to new and fruitful pathways of discovery. Staff know that as they uncover more detailed information, and view achievement through different lenses, this will lead to innovative and improved class practice and to ratcheting up student achievement.

The principal runs a very tight ship, skillfully works to staff strengths and distributes leadership wherever possible. All staff, parents and students speak very well of him, praising his openness and honesty. The teachers say, "He's a great leader who knows how important it is to take care of the little things which tip the whole." The staff provide very good role models for students in their team working and collaboration. Students in turn respond to their teachers' good example, and work hard, behave well and are courteous to each other and to the staff. The school is working hard to increase attendance although it is still below the City average.

Since the last Quality Review, the school now sets interim measures of success and makes comparisons between classes, grades and academies. There is good differentiation and accurate self-assessment. Students now receive constructive feedback on their achievement to date through regular conferences. The inquiry team has been set up for some time and has undertaken useful action research with a group of those students who are most in need of support. The team has put in place successful strategies that have had a beneficial effect on these students' achievement.

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 the student's progress over time.

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

The school systematically gathers detailed information on students' achievement and progress. It has increased the range of data it collects quite significantly since the last review. This is allowing teachers to accurately track the progress of individual students and to target instruction even more precisely to meet the varying needs and capabilities of the students. There is already clear evidence that this process is having a positive impact upon students' performance, particularly with students who were struggling in math. The school recognizes that it does not yet pool together all its data in a way which can easily be used as a basis for determining long-term educational strategies.

The school gathers good information about both the performance and progress of individual students. This is a key reason why students who are struggling, as well as special education students and English language learners are making such good gains in learning. In math, the incisive analysis of data has led this year to a significant rise in the performance of students. The school does well in tracking the progress of some groups of students such as classes or grades. However it does not gather and use information about the progress well enough to allow the school to establish clearly whether its strategies and improvements are adding maximum value to the students' education. The school has provided very good opportunities for staff to help them make sense of the new information around the school, and in making full use of it when planning instruction.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school has much new information which it plans to use to improve its arrangements for planning and setting goals. At present the school uses its data mainly reactively to uncover low achievement, to search for reasons behind the low achievement and to put in place remedial strategies. Because the systems for gathering data are very new, the school has not yet been able to use the data in a more proactive way across all areas of learning as part of a comprehensive whole-school approach to setting goals and strategic planning. Nevertheless, there is much emerging good practice, particularly in English language arts and math, where senior staff are taking a strong lead.

At the individual level, each student has their own goals for achievement in English language arts and math, which teachers monitor carefully in the regular student conferences. Students say that they really like having this opportunity to look at their own progress to date and to decide on their next steps alongside the teacher. This is of particular benefit to students who are struggling. Not all staff are equally skilful in goal setting, so that a few students have individual goals which are too general and not easily measured.

Parents feel very involved in the life of the school and appreciate the lengths to which all staff go to give and receive information about their children's goals and their progress towards meeting them. They particularly appreciate the way in which the school demands the very best from their children.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

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

The school has become very skilful at adjusting the curriculum and modifying instruction in response to its analysis of the information available. The school has tried a number of approaches to improve attendance, but these have not yet been entirely effective and attendance remains below the city average. Levels of trust and respect are extremely high all around the school. Teachers provide very good support for each other, and there is a palpable feeling of comradeship among the staff team. This mutual respect is replicated in the relationships between staff and students, and can be seen in the classrooms where students are attentive, ready to learn and helpful to each other. When they were asked what they like most about the school, the students said without hesitation: "The teachers!"

The school is very inclusive and welcomes students at all levels of achievement. The school groups students by achievement, although the school's data shows that there is still a wide range of achievement in each class. The school ensures, through its monitoring support and professional development for teachers, that there is further effective differentiation within each stream. The school has developed an array of effective specialized, inclusive organizational approaches such as the use of collaborative team teaching and self-contained classes. The students like these support systems and appreciate the way in which the activities are custom-made to fit individual need. They feel this helps them to develop and make progress.

Students, staff and parents identify the principal's diligence, commitment and friendliness as key reasons why the atmosphere is as good as it is. One parent said, "All the kids, they love him." The curriculum on offer has a good balance of academic, creative and sporting subjects, although some students say that they would like more gym and to learn a modern foreign language. Students enjoy the good range of activities provided outside the school day, such as dance, chess and track and field. The principal is an astute decision-maker particularly in budgeting and staffing, and his decisions have had clear benefits for students. For example, the principal has successfully attracted major funding from City programs to assist students who are long-term English language learners.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

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

All staff share the administration's vision of what improvements and adjustments are necessary, and professional development is accurately directed towards achieving this

vision. At the same time, the administration has nurtured a great climate for self-improvement among staff and students. Administrators and faculty have a strong belief that the key to raising achievement lies in growing staff so that they have continuously updated skills, knowledge and understanding to meet the increasingly intensive demands arising from the new, highly specific information coming in. In the main, they are very successful in this. Teachers still require further professional development so that they all understand clearly how best to utilize data about the progress of the different groups within the school.

Senior staff visit classes frequently and provide teachers with both formal and informal feedback that is valued. As one teacher said, "We are very fortunate in our supervisors. We get lots of feedback, as well as checklists for improvement. They're always there for advice. They give me the impetus to come to school." Teachers visit each other's lessons and provide very useful critiques and critical friendship to each other. Teachers who are new to the profession are very appreciative of the timely and encouraging support they receive from experienced colleagues and from the administration. A new teacher confirmed, "On our floor, all the teachers work hard together, and there's lots of reflection about what to do better for the kids. We are each other's best support."

The principal's management of the school is outstanding, and the school runs like clockwork. As one teacher put it, "That which gets supervised, gets done." Because of this, staff and students are able to operate confidently within a consistent, calm and safe environment.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school now gathers much high quality information on the performance of individual students, and evaluates progress effectively through individual conferences. The school is beginning to widen this system to evaluate how well each of the groups within the school is performing, and there is emerging strong practice in English language arts and math. Teachers in other subject areas such as science and social studies are following events closely and are adopting the good practice as quickly as possible. The school has not yet drawn all its monitoring structures and processes together to form a coherent and comprehensive strategy for whole school improvement.

Having said this, the school is clearly making a determined effort to have effective arrangements in place by the end of this school year. Milestones for achievement have been established in many, though not all, key areas. The school's monitoring still focuses more strongly on the standards which students achieve, and not sufficiently on the progress made by the different groups against their various starting points. The principal and administration are setting a good pace of change, and they are careful not to overload and overwhelm teachers. At the same time, the principal has transmitted a clear sense of the direction in which he wishes all the school community to travel. The community is right behind him in the drive for improvement.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: James P. Sinnott Magnet School	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
Quality Score			X		

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?			X		
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?			X		
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?				X	
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X	

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?			X		
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?			X		
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?				X	
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?			X		
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X		

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?				X	
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?					X
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.					
To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?				X	
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?					X
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4					X

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.					
To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?			X		
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?			X		
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?			X		
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5					X

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped