



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The John J. Pershing School

Junior High School 220

**4812 9th Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11220**

Principal: Loretta Witek

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The John J. Pershing School is a junior high school with 1305 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 3% Black, 51% Hispanic, 8% White, and 38% Asian students. The student body includes 33% English language learners and 4% 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 92.8%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 87% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The leadership of the principal is outstanding because she effects change seamlessly and highly effectively.
- The school's strategic plans for school improvement are of high quality and successfully drive forward change.
- The school has developed a rigorous and comprehensive system for collecting and analyzing data which is used to set goals for grades, classes and subjects.
- The clear vision for the future of the school is shared and promoted well by all members of the school community.
- All teachers are fully aware of what the data means for each of their students and this enables them to differentiate their instruction very well.
- Instruction is designed extremely well and encourages all students to take risks in a safe and secure environment.
- Teacher's expertise in differentiating their questioning develops students' thinking skills which results in accelerated progress.
- Instruction is observed regularly by the principal and her administration and outcomes are linked rigorously with professional development.
- English language learners and special education students are catered to extremely well.
- The behavior and attitudes of the students are excellent because systems are simple but effective.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to improve the outreach work and communication with parents and further develop ways to involve them even more fully in their children's education.
- Improve the opportunities provided for students to develop their skills in the arts and particularly music.
- Provide more guidance to students about life after grade 8 and what they may expect from high school and the world of work.

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 well developed.

Since the time of the last review, the school has worked tirelessly to address the identified issues. It has made good progress because it has rigorously tackled each area for improvement in a systematic and determined way. Not only has the collection of data been formalized, its analysis is exemplary and informs decision making at all levels. In turn, this has had an excellent impact on the quality of instruction making it more interesting for the students and placing great emphasis on their learning styles. Discussion centered upon instructional quality and lesson design is now a daily occurrence and is linked well with classroom assessment. There is now a real focus on what students are actually learning.

Data collection and analysis is at the center of everything the school does. No child is left behind in this school. Data is collected from a wide range of sources including the school's own assessments, results of tests, results of interventions and student interviews. This is expertly analyzed so that the progress of all students is measured accurately. Because the process is robust, it is particularly effective at identifying and tracking those students most at risk of underachieving, English language learners and special education students. This is more evidence to show how far the school has come since its last review.

The principal has created a school where trust and respect underpins every aspect of its work. Student's excellent behavior demonstrates how much they enjoy their learning. Teachers know that the school does everything it can to help them to improve their instruction. This is why they "feel free to try new things". The staff confidential "suggestion box" provides a forum for teachers to ask for hints and tips about their instruction. The Comprehensive Education Plan sets clear goals and gives information about how those goals can be achieved in areas such as instruction. It links very well with planned professional development. Teachers praise the wide variety of training that is offered to them to enable them to improve instruction to meet their performance goals.

The core curriculum is well planned and is continually reviewed to ensure that students achieve as well as possible. Subject areas each have their own pacing calendars and there is evidence of some good cross-curricular working patterns. Links between literacy, social studies and science are strong. Enrichment includes computer skills, art, drama and gym but there is only limited access to any musical activities.

The work of the inquiry team is well organized and has already had an impact on the learning of lower achieving students in grade 7. A great deal of intensive work has been done to gather data on each student's learning style and instruction has been aligned accordingly. Teachers have been given appropriate professional development on how to adapt instruction to these learning styles. Students are interviewed weekly by their teacher about the progress they have 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 the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is outstanding.

The assistant principal with responsibility for data management is talented and very able. He has brought the data to life for the teachers and has empowered them to use it. The school collects and utilizes a very wide range of data from assessments and tests so that it can monitor and review the progress of all students easily and accurately. There are regular assessment cycles which monitor not only reading, writing and math but the learning styles of students. This is a real strength and has been a focus which has had an excellent impact on student progress. All teachers are aware of the learning styles of their students. In addition, data has been collected and analyzed on the learning styles of teachers which has been effective in giving them a real understanding of how individual students learn. The assistant principal ensures that teachers use the data by introducing a cycle of systematic monitoring.

In addition to a commercial system, the school uses its own set of midterm assessments to enhance its data set even more. In each subject area, weaknesses in the skill sets of students are identified and instruction then concentrates on these areas. This has resulted in particular improvement in math.

Systems for monitoring and evaluating the progress of English language learners and special education students are sophisticated, yet easily understood by all staff. The progress of special education students is very well tracked through individual education plans which set clear promotional criteria which are measurable and time bound. English language learners have benefited from an in depth analysis of their data which has resulted in specific strategies for instruction. These were observed at work in an excellent English as a second language lesson where students were encouraged to take risks and speak out. In all classes, attention is paid to speaking and listening and this is a significant factor in why these students achieve so very well. The school has identified its next priority is to examine data held about ethnic groups and progress against similar schools.

Because the school analyzes both achievement data and data about the personal development of students simultaneously it is able to gain a picture of the whole student. This enables the correct climate for learning to be established for every individual.

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 well developed.

The school makes very effective use of its data to identify academic needs for individuals, grades and subgroups and there has been a particular focus on the goals set in reading, writing and math. Short, medium and long-term goals are set for individual students in these areas which has resulted in specific interventions being put into place so that students can achieve these goals. This in turn has had an effect on the curriculum, especially in math. The goals that are set target skills for learning. For example, specified topics within the math curriculum are revisited at regular intervals. These topics have been identified through a data analysis of results from tests which demonstrated gaps in student learning.

The performance of those students in greatest need of improvement has been enhanced. This is because their specific needs are identified early by regular testing and assessment and rigorous programs of targeted instruction are put into place by the academic intervention services. Teachers keep individualized, comprehensive assessment notebooks on each student and adapt their teaching styles closely to the learning styles of the students. Teachers clearly look for progress in every lesson and record this well.

Collaboration is a highly effective component of this school's goal-setting process. Teachers, coaches, counselors and the students are all actively involved in making sure that goals are tailored to individual need and that they are measurable and time bound. The significant majority of students know their goals and what they need to do to achieve them. Students are held responsible for monitoring their own goals at least three times a year and spoke highly about how this helps to raise their self-esteem.

The school consistently conveys high expectations to the whole school community and provides information to parents about the goals set for their children. Parents are kept well informed about the progress and performance of their children but do not always provide as much information in return. The school is aware of this and is constantly trying to develop new ways to more actively involve parents in the life of the school such as organizing free childcare so that parents can attend meetings more easily.

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.

English language arts teachers have collaborated well with other content teachers. This is evidenced by the emphasis on narrative accounts being incorporated into social studies lessons. Work has also been done on writing non-fictional texts which has had a positive impact on the writing in science. Teachers structure their instruction extremely well in a way that supports students in pushing the boundaries of their learning in a secure environment. For example, in a compelling social studies lesson, the teacher spoke eloquently about child labor. Students were able to confidently share their ideas about what it must have been like to work an eight hour shift at six years old.

The curriculum is reasonably broad, but the school agrees that there is too little opportunity for students to engage in musical activities. Students are able to participate in out of school activities such as basketball, soccer, volleyball and art.

The school is using a wide range of assessment models and initiatives in order to raise the achievement of English language learners. This, coupled with the focus on learning styles and speaking and listening, means that this group of learners are make particularly good progress. More generally, teachers are embracing more diverse instructional techniques to accommodate the learning styles of their students. For example, there has been a marked increase in requests for specific materials, visual aids and manipulatives. Through their excellent knowledge and understanding of student data, teachers plan for differentiated teaching accurately and pitch the lessons to the particular needs and of the students. Teachers are particularly expert in questioning skills. The questions asked in lessons are carefully differentiated so that all students are included in class discussion. Students were prompted to think hard and this led to them making good or better progress towards their goals. Responses to the questioning enables teachers to more accurately gauge the next steps in differentiated learning.

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.

The principal and her administration monitor instruction rigorously and clearly link what they observe to professional development for teachers. Teachers collaborate well together to improve their instruction. In the words of one teacher new to the profession, "I have learned so much from other teachers in this school." Inter-visitations are commonplace, teachers attend outside workshops and participate in focus groups where instruction is discussed, modified and improved. There is an ongoing dialogue between teachers and coaches, who also model effective instructional approaches. The principal is not afraid to challenge weak instruction and organizes individualized support programs to aid improvement. All teachers have performance goals which are reviewed and discussed. Teachers say that the principal is "firm but fair" and "notices us as individuals".

There are very effective induction procedures in place to ensure that new staff settle quickly into school routines, reducing disruption for the students. They are able to work with colleagues and attend courses to help them make a good start to their career.

All staff are aware of the need to develop the whole child and as a result the counselor and guidance team make sure that students stand the best possible chance of successfully reaching their personal goals. However, the school does not provide sufficient information to students about the next stage of their education and possible future career paths. Student's behavior and attitudes are excellent and the pride they have in their school clearly shines through. This is because the systems in school are clear, staff follow them and students know exactly what is expected of them. These systems are built on mutual respect and one student said, "The principal is the best principal ever, she gives us respect."

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 well developed.

The aspirational leadership of the principal is outstanding. Her ability to develop effective and cohesive teamwork among the cabinet and to effect change have been key factors in moving the school forward towards its goals. She has created a passion for success and all staff both share and are enthusiastic about the vision she has for the future of the school. Teachers praise the principal highly for her work and say, "The little things really matter; there is real attention to detail." She is always looking for new ways to help students reach their goals and reach their potential.

The principal and her cabinet evaluate the work the school does effectively and regularly, tweaking the Comprehensive Education Plan as they go. This is a very good document of "work in progress" and is used as an effective tool to guide improvement. It clearly sets out whole school goals designed to bring about change and gives clear success criteria and time limits. The document is shared with staff who all have a part to play to reach these goals. The school makes very good use of the data it collects and feeds this into effective planning for further improvement. The school checks the success of any interventions they put into place and modifies them accordingly. Students are all aware of the close scrutiny they are under but say that this helps them to set their goals and achieve them.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: John J. Pershing School	△	▶	✓	+	◇
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 . . .	△	▶	✓	+	◇
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 . . .	△	▶	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set demanding, 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?				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?				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 make 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	