



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

John H. Finley Campus School

Elementary School 129

**425 West 130 Street
New York
NY 10027**

Principal: Odelphia Pierre

Dates of review: January 30 - 31, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Tony Boys

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

John H. Finley is an elementary school with 498 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 6. The school population comprises 49% Black, 48% Hispanic, 0% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 16% English language learners and 15% 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 91.0%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 72% eligibility.

The school has established many successful partnerships with outside agencies and community-based organizations to enhance its curriculum. Most of the students live in the school's neighborhood zone but a small number travel in from other parts of the city.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal leads the school extremely well, remaining true to the school's mission statement, "Excellence without excuses".
- The school has established very productive partnerships with outside agencies to support students' academic, social and emotional education.
- The school conveys very high expectations to the whole community.
- The curriculum is extremely rich and varied with numerous opportunities for students to extend their learning outside the school day.
- The principal and administration use assessment data well to make strategic decisions to improve student outcomes.
- Teachers use a wide range of assessments to gain a very good knowledge of individual students' progress.
- Instruction meets students' individual needs very well because teachers base planning on a sound understanding of assessment data.
- The school values and encourages parental involvement and provides very good opportunities for parents to support their children's education.
- The school has very good procedures to ensure smooth running, providing a safe, secure and stimulating learning environment.
- Measures to reward and encourage good behavior and attendance are very effective.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend the school's use of data to analyze its performance over time and across cohorts and subject areas.
- Refine systems for setting measurable and objective goals linked to specific targets based on rubrics that all students understand.
- Review professional development opportunities to help teachers set specific goals for improvement in identified areas.

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.

The principal leads the school extremely well, remaining true to the school's mission statement, "Excellence without excuses". This philosophy underpins all school activities and is at the root of the high expectations that the school communicates very successfully to the whole community. The school has established extremely productive partnerships with a wide range of outside agencies to support students' academic, social and emotional education. This extensive community involvement enriches the students' experience by giving them access to a high-quality curriculum, within and beyond the school day. The school has a particularly strong focus on arts education, with a very wide range of courses and activities available, including instrumental music instruction. Parental involvement is very important to the school and the parent coordinator and staff work extremely well to encourage and motivate parents. The school operates a successful parental leadership academy, which parents value highly.

The school focuses strongly on using valid assessment data to inform planning. The principal and administration use assessment data well to make strategic decisions to improve student outcomes. This is evident in bold curriculum changes resulting from careful consideration of data allied to meaningful consultation with staff. Teachers understand student progress well because they collect a wide range of relevant assessment data. They use this data to plan work that meets individual students' needs well. As a result students make good academic progress, particularly in math, where results compare very well to similar schools. The school does not, as of yet, analyze performance over time and across cohorts and subject areas. Teachers use data to set goals for students but these are not always specific enough for students to know exactly how they can improve. All grades use rubrics for assessment but these are not well understood by students because they often use difficult language. Professional development has not yet fully addressed these issues.

The school runs very smoothly because of the effective systems to ensure good order and good behavior. These are reinforced by very effective measures to reward and encourage good attendance. As a result the school provides a safe, secure and harmonious learning environment, enhanced by high quality displays in classrooms and hallways. The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report by improving the use of data and developing the role of technology in data management. The data inquiry team is established and is working well with identified students to raise 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.

Teachers use a wide range of tests and assessments to gain a very good understanding of individual students' progress. Standardized tests supplement teacher assessments and scrutiny of work samples to build up a clear picture of each student's achievement and progress. Special education students and English language learners also undergo additional assessments appropriate to their needs, which provide further data to monitor progress. Teachers keep good records of assessment data in their own personal binders and the school keeps an overall record of progress on a student monitoring board. This shows the current and past levels of all students in grades 3 to 6 so that their progress can be monitored throughout the year. This provides a very effective check on students who may be slipping back or those who may need additional challenge. The school's data specialist also analyzes data by gender and ethnic group to detect patterns or anomalies in progress. The principal has established contact with similar schools to identify and share good practice, leading to intervisitations that have broadened teachers' knowledge of assessment procedures. All these processes ensure that the school has a very good understanding of the current performance of individual students. The school's analysis of its own performance over time and across cohorts and subject areas is done in less depth and is not as useful in helping the school to frame improvement strategies. Teachers have had good access to training in the use of assessment to inform planning and instruction, ensuring that they are confident in handling and analyzing data. Staff have attended external training on the use of the Acuity on-line materials and the coaches have provided training in response to individual needs. Teachers affirm that this has been very effective in enhancing their skills

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's systems for gathering and recording assessment data enable teachers to set improvement goals for individual students and to focus very effectively on students who are underachieving. The student monitoring board is a very useful device for giving an instant visual indication of students' relative rates of progress, on which to base goals for improvement. Teachers' own informal assessments supplement this information and help to give a better understanding of each student's progress, in order to meet their individual needs. The use of rubrics for English language arts and math in all grades helps to clarify test requirements for students. However, the goals set for students are sometimes too general for them to understand what specific aspects of their performance they need to improve. For example, most students can say what level they are aiming at but few can say what they specifically need to do to get there. In addition, the rubrics help students to see what good performance looks like but they are not always stated in language that students can easily understand, making them less useful than they could be. However, in math very effective skills analysis helps students and

teachers to see exactly where improvement is needed and the positive effect of this can be seen in the very good progress that students make in the subject. The school values parental involvement highly and has very effective systems to encourage and facilitate it. The parent coordinator produces very helpful materials including a parents' handbook that makes the school's high expectations very clear. These are reinforced by many other formal and informal means, including a regular bilingual newsletter. In addition the school runs a parental leadership academy to help parents understand their important role in supporting their children's education. This is an extremely valuable resource for parents, which they hold in high regard. The academy provides a well designed program and a certificate on completion. The quality of the school's relationships with parents has a very positive influence on learning.

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 curriculum is very broad and relevant, with a strong focus on the arts. In addition to mandatory subjects, the school provides a very wide range of courses and activities within and beyond the school day. These include literacy and math enhancement programs, as well as extensive opportunities for further study in science, music, dance, sports and instrumental music instruction. Many of these are supported by the school's very effective external partnerships. The high quality and range of the curriculum has a very positive influence on students' achievement and motivation.

Very effective measures to encourage and reward good attendance reinforce this. Students with excellent or much-improved attendance are rewarded with "elegant dining" lunches and special trips out of school. These are very popular with students and help them to develop further their social skills. The school monitors attendance very closely and displays class statistics on bulletin boards. Students can also attend continental breakfasts to encourage early arrival at school. These measures have steadily improved attendance and have a very positive effect on students' progress. Teachers reinforce learning by using data effectively to plan work that meets students' individual needs well. Relationships are very good and students remain engaged in their studies.

The school uses data well to ensure that strategic decisions support learning. The school's considered decision to change its whole literacy program to raise achievement exemplifies this strategic approach to developing learning. The school also operates accelerated reading programs and a program to meet the needs of gifted and talented students. These meet the needs of individual students very well.

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 school's very successful and wide-ranging external partnerships have a very positive influence on learning by extending and enriching the curriculum. This provides

extensive additional opportunities for students to develop their academic and social skills. Administration monitors instruction closely to ensure that it meets students' needs and to give constructive feedback and identify training needs. Teachers find this helpful in improving their skills. They also have good opportunities to plan together and to observe each other teaching in order to share good practice. These professional development arrangements have been successful in improving instruction and enhancing teachers' skills in assessing and using data. They have not yet focused closely on training teachers to set specific goals that help students to know exactly what they need to do to improve.

The school's effective procedures for ensuring smooth running enhance and support instruction, maintaining a calm, orderly and secure environment for learning. Parents and students are very positive about the atmosphere in school. Relationships are harmonious and classrooms and hallways are bright and welcoming, with good displays of students' work. New teachers receive good support from colleagues and from the school's induction procedures. This very positive atmosphere promotes learning

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 principal leads the school extremely well in pursuing the school's aim of "Excellence without excuses". Staff, students and parents understand the school's high expectations of work and conduct that underpin this mission statement. Parents say that the school makes them feel "part of a family". The principal and administration work very well with teachers and parents to develop strategic plans to achieve the school's aims. These plans reflect a sound understanding of data and its implications for learning. They include clear and measurable outcomes for students and teachers so that progress in implementing strategies can be monitored and plans revised when necessary. This approach has resulted in effective changes to the curriculum and instruction to bring about improvement. The school's decision to change its literacy program in order to improve progress in literacy exemplifies this approach. The decision was made in consultation with staff, after careful analysis of data showed the need to take action. The school's current assessment data shows that it is beginning to have a positive impact on achievement.

The school's thoughtful approach to strategic planning ensures that it remains focused on promoting students' social development, raising achievement and promoting progress. In doing so, it attracts a high level of participation from the whole community, which has a very positive impact on learning and progress

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: John H. Finley Campus 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