



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

John Thompson School

Elementary School 052

**450 Buel Avenue
Staten Island
NY 10305**

Principal: Evelyn Mastroianni

Dates of review: November 1 - 2, 2007

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

John Thompson School is an elementary school with 643 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 4% Black, 15% Hispanic, 73% White, and 8% Asian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 17% 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 93.2%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 39% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and assistant principals have a passionate vision for the school's development that fires the enthusiasm of students, staff and parents alike.
- The school gathers particularly detailed and useful data to help teachers set plans and goals for students' improvement.
- Special education students do especially well because of the carefully crafted individualized programs that help them achieve their potential.
- Students and parents are eager to rise to meet the challenge of the school's exceptionally high expectations of them.
- The curriculum is designed to meet students' needs remarkably well through its emphasis on interdisciplinary connections.
- Innovative approaches to instruction ensure students are taught consistently well and enjoy their learning.
- Students thrive because they are treated with respect and forge extremely positive relationships with staff.
- Incisive observations of teaching, by the principal and assistant principals, build up a very clear picture of the strengths and needs of instruction.
- High quality professional development, both inside and outside the school, empowers teachers and has a beneficial impact on students' outcomes.
- Regular assessments of progress towards whole school goals mean timely adjustments can be made to facilitate their completion.

What the school needs to improve

- Further develop professional development to ensure all teachers are confident in using the new data systems independently to set goals that enable every student to make annual yearly progress.
- Continue to develop the use of new technology, such as smartboards, to enhance instruction and engage students 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 well developed.

John Thompson School is a thriving community of learners where teachers and students enjoy one another's company and work together with a thirst for knowledge and a quest for discovery. The principal and assistant principals expect the highest standards from everybody and lead by example through their energy and commitment. They anticipate needs and are proactive in finding solutions to the challenges they face. This breeds a can-do culture that fosters innovation and creativity. Specialist teaching of the core subjects has been extended this year from grade 5 into grades 3 and 4, with the result that students receive expert instruction and teachers can focus their energies into a single subject. The school's data specialist gives teachers a wealth of detailed and useful information about how well their students are doing, and identifies trends across classrooms and grades. Teachers use this information most adeptly to set goals for students. With the adoption of new systems, the school recognizes the need for teachers to be able to interpret and analyze data independently.

A student commented, "It's easier to learn something when you enjoy it." This sums up the essence of the instruction, which groups students in ways that challenge them and involves them actively in their learning. The introduction of "literature circles" has enhanced the level of discussion and students' appreciation of books. Since the last review, the school has mapped out the curriculum carefully and more sharply to show what skills and knowledge the students will learn. There is a very good level of enrichment, with strong links across subject areas such as art and poetry. The school is looking to increase its use of technology in the classroom, for example through the introduction of interactive smartboards. Special education students in particular benefit from individualized programs of study and make good gains in their learning. The school has carried out some useful research into the relative performance of boys and girls, and this forms the basis of its inquiry team's work, with particular emphasis on boys in English language arts and girls in math. The inquiry team is well advanced in its deliberations.

Teachers meet regularly together to look at students' progress and to share ideas. The coaches offer valuable support and align high quality professional development to teachers' needs. Events such as "meet and eat" at lunchtimes have expanded the opportunities for professional development since the last review. A coach said, "The more passionate the teacher is, the more passionate the children become." and it is this great enthusiasm, this "spark" the principal looks for when making appointments, that characterizes the staff. Parents fully appreciate all the school does for their children, and say how smoothly it runs, because of its high expectations and particularly well organized procedures. They find it "personable" and say it responds quickly to concerns. One parent said, "Our voice counts." The school has made good progress in tackling all the areas of development from the last review and is very well placed to continue its successful growth.

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 has sophisticated systems in place to gather data and uses it extremely effectively to track students' progress. The data specialist prepares briefings for teachers and attends grade level meetings to discuss the key points. Regular meetings of staff ensure that assessments are monitored closely and strategies devised to tackle any deficiencies in students' performance. Students' work, such as examples of their writing, is considered alongside other assessments, for patterns and trends over time.

Running records and anecdotal assessments are used to evaluate the progress of special education students towards the targets on their individual education plans. Equal rigor is applied in measuring the success of English language learners towards their goals. The school looks in more depth at the progress of boys and girls, since it was raised as an area to develop at the last review. Steps have been taken to reduce the relative achievement gap between them, in particular for boys in English language arts and girls in math. This includes ensuring books are appealing to the boys.

The school compares its performance with that of similar schools, contacting principals to find out what they do well, and learning from their experiences. Teachers have become skilled in using the Pearson assessment system to find out students' strengths and areas of weakness. The school now recognizes the need for them to become fully conversant in the use of new online databases and guidance to deepen their understanding of how to plan interventions to ensure all pupils make the best annual yearly progress.

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.

Teachers collaborate together at weekly grade level meetings to develop plans to help students improve, based on the latest data. In grades 3 through 5, because of the specialist teaching, every teacher knows all the students and this adds depth to their discussions. As one of the coaches put it, "Every child is a case study." Each grade has a monthly pupil progress team meeting, when all the professionals share information about those students in most need of support and plan new interventions. This is an especially robust process, with a high level of expertise among staff, so that students receive every kind of assistance. This reflects well in their subsequent performance.

Students identified as at risk of not making annual yearly progress receive particular attention. Effective individual plans are drawn up for them, describing what help is required. These are evaluated frequently to measure their success, and to introduce new tiers of support where needed.

Teachers are fully involved in drawing up the school's Comprehensive Education Plan, and are very aware of whole school goals such as improving data-driven differentiated instruction, critical thinking in problem-solving and following directions. The principal and assistant principals expect much of students and their parents and keep the bar raised high. Students endeavor to meet their expectations because they value the experiences

they receive. Parents are kept very well informed about their children's progress, and aids such as home-links books, email newsletters and automated phone messaging ensure they know what is happening at school.

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.

Much work has gone into designing an integrated fully-relevant curriculum that interests and engages all students. Curriculum maps separate out skills and knowledge to be learnt, an improvement since the last review. Innovative approaches to instruction include using specialist teachers for the core subjects in grades 3 through 5. This makes the teaching consistent across the grade because all students have the same expert teacher for English language arts or math. The subjects are linked together very well. In art, for example, students paint expressive landscapes, about which they would later compose poems. The instruction is lively and exciting for students. One said, "Literature circles are a fun way of learning: they help me understand more about the books I'm reading." In a kindergarten class, children loved the suspense of the story, "In a Dark, Dark Wood" before placing pictures of its events in order.

The curriculum is greatly enriched through the arts, music and gym, with a good range of visits and extra-curricular activities for students to enjoy. The school has two bands and choruses, and puts on memorable performances. There are enrichment classes to challenge higher achieving students. Students often work in differentiated groups, ensuring that work is not too easy or difficult for them, and have opportunities to collaborate in pairs and groups. They assess one another's work and use rubrics to agree the right level.

Data is used to inform staffing and scheduling decisions, for example in employing a full time Wilson phonics teacher to better equip students for the grade 3 state tests. Much care goes into deploying students and teachers where they will perform best, and deciding who can offer the most effective support for a student in need.

The school is an inclusive environment, where students are very accepting of one another, especially those with disabilities. They work and play together harmoniously, and are not afraid to take risks. A teacher told her class, "You can always make your mistakes work for you." which epitomizes the school's positive approach. Relationships are excellent. Students feel valued and supported. Their attendance has improved as a result of the school's first day calling policy and incentives such as the monthly class competition.

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.

A coach remarked, "Everybody wants to be on board." in praising teachers' willingness to take on new initiatives. Teachers are eager to improve their practice, and are open and supportive in the way they observe one another teach and share good ideas. The principal and assistant principals all conduct daily walkthroughs of every classroom, and meet together over lunch to discuss what they have seen. In this way, they build up a thorough informal picture of the strengths and needs of instruction, backed up by frequent,

more formal, observations. Teachers are given clear points for improvement and the professional development necessary to achieve them. Training is linked very closely to whole school goals, with regular workshops in interpreting data, higher-order questioning and “literature circles”. The new teacher induction committee ensures those new to the profession receive all the support and guidance they need, with a carefully planned program of development individually designed for each teacher.

Support services are fully integrated into the life of the school, which enables medically fragile and physically disabled students to be included in all activities. The school psychologist and guidance counselor play an important role in ensuring that vulnerable students receive the help they need in socializing and building self-esteem.

Outstanding systems promote consistency to enable the school to run particularly smoothly, with clear policies for discipline and homework and a shared understanding among all staff of the principal’s expectations. This means students know exactly where they stand and where the boundaries lie.

The school enjoys many fruitful partnerships with outside organizations. For example, it has been involved in designing the banner for the New York Marathon and “Gardens in Transit”, a program to paint flowers on taxi-cabs. Other links include partnerships with the zoo, museums and the arts center and collaboration with the West End Symphony Orchestra that combines music with literacy.

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.

Teachers set challenging goals for all students and check how well they are moving towards them through regular interim assessments. They make timely adjustments to planning and instruction in the light of what the latest data tells them. For example, subtraction skills emerged as a weakness for several students and the coaches prepared new materials to help teachers to reinforce students’ understanding. This addressed the deficiency successfully. The instructional team meets monthly to consider what professional development is required and to measure the impact of training on classroom instruction.

The writing of the Comprehensive Education Plan is devolved to teachers and parents, who cooperate in submitting proposals to the senior leadership team. This gives everybody a say and a commitment to fully implementing the ensuing whole school goals. Monthly meetings of the senior leadership team monitor progress and strategic decisions are made to improve student outcomes, such as bidding for a grant to fund a new phonics program in the kindergarten and grade 1. Over time, this process has made the faculty more accountable, given parents a real say in their children’s education and has seen students’ scores rise considerably. The principal’s and assistant principals’ enduring vision for the school is worked out through inspired leadership and a proactive approach that sees potential barriers to growth as opportunities for continued improvement. They embrace change and find innovative and creative ways to provide the very best for their students.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: JOHN THOMPSON 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	