



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Joseph Rodman Drake School

Elementary School 048

**1290 Spofford Avenue
Bronx
NY 10474**

Principal: Roxanne Cardona

Dates of review: May 29 - 30, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Kathleen Tuttle

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Joseph Rodman Drake School is an elementary school with 960 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 28% Black, 71% Hispanic and 1% White students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 22% 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 87.7%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 86% eligibility.

The principal is in her first year at the school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's high-quality leadership provides the vision and momentum for the school's continuous improvement agenda.
- Teachers collaborate well to plan the curriculum, instruction and create a nurturing environment where students are actively engaged in learning.
- There are strong procedures in place for reviewing student outcomes and providing related teacher support.
- The administration has a high profile around the school and this promotes good relationships and a positive environment for learning.
- Staff create a calm, caring and respectful environment where students' achievements are celebrated in colorful displays throughout the school.
- The school sets focused, individual goals for each student so they know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Teachers collaboratively arrange their own opportunities for inter and intra class visitations which is completely supported by the administration.
- The school has an outstanding performing arts program that strongly contributes to students' self esteem and pride in their school.
- Communication links are established to enable parents to provide the school with feedback about their children's interests and learning styles.

What the school needs to improve

- Build on existing good practice to further enhance teachers' skills in differentiating instruction to increase academic rigor for all students.
- Provide ongoing professional development that is driven by New York State Content Standards and Performance Indicators.
- Expand the data on student progress to include comparison with past performance and use this data in the goal setting and planning process.
- Expand school wide goals so they are content driven, measurable, and include interim benchmarks to measure progress.
- Formalize goal setting for teacher outcomes with objectively measurable interim goals and timeframes for measuring success and make adjustments.

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 describes the school as being “all about teaming and working together to teach the whole child”. This is best demonstrated by the collaboration between teachers to share best practices by scheduling their own inter class visitations and teacher led workshops. The school has a large number of coaches who provide professional development in all the content areas based on student and teacher need. However, as yet State content standards and performance indicators have not driven the professional development.

The school uses varied data sources very well to constantly monitor students’ learning. It has a system for tracking and monitoring the performance of each student at classroom, grade and school level including the performance of special education and English language learners. While the school has established goals, they are not yet measurable or content driven with interim benchmarks to measure progress. Teacher goal setting is done informally and has yet to have a formalized structure that includes interim goals with timeframes for measuring success and making adjustments. Students’ know their goals, but these are not yet measurable or communicated effectively to parents. While differentiation of instruction occurs to meet most students’ needs throughout the school, differentiation of instruction to raise the performance for the higher achieving students is not consistent practice.

Performing arts are an integral part of the curriculum which produces outstanding student performances of which both the students and the community feel are a corner stone of the school. The classrooms and hallways are enlivened by well-presented displays of work and other stimulating materials. These reflect the school’s high expectations and help create a rich learning environment.

Since the previous Quality Review the school designated special education performance an area of focus for the year. The Inquiry Team chose the grade 4 students who were struggling in English language arts as its target population. The Aussie consultant’s professional development days were totally devoted to special education in English language arts. The result has been a significant increase in grade 4 English language arts scores of students scoring levels 3 or 4 in 2008.

The principal has demonstrated a dynamic, reflective, child centered leadership style during her first year as principal. The administrative team has a high visibility in classrooms and throughout the school. The entire school building reflects that tone in both hallways and classrooms and by the high level of mutual trust and respect.

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 uses data very effectively at all levels to monitor student progress. Teachers receive training and are confident users of data to inform their planning and instruction. Tests, quizzes and teacher assessments are used well to monitor the progress in math. Teachers make excellent use of conferencing and assessment rubrics to give an updated picture of the progress in students' writing. The principal collects weekly writing samples from each teacher to monitor the progress in writing and all work is returned with written feedback to teachers. In addition, the administration meets periodically throughout the year individually with teachers to monitor student work and offer suggestions to aid student progress.

The school uses data very well to analyze the performance of students by ethnicity, gender and by other groupings. They noticed a difference between the performance of females and males in both math and literacy. In order to close an achievement gap high interest reading material for boys was purchased and more writing was done in the area of open-ended questioning in math. Currently the school hasn't a clear knowledge of its progress over multiple years at school subject, grade and classroom levels. The school does track the performance of their special education and English language learners, which influences their goal setting as well as, teacher professional development. Similar schools were reviewed and visitation was made to learn what practices those schools had in place that increased their attendance. The school has instituted attendance incentives, school assemblies, fun Friday's and the principal's honor roll which has shown an increase in student attendance.

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 sets specific goals for improving individual student performance in literacy and math. Most students know their goals and they are changed when a student meets those goals. However, the goals are not yet measurable with clear time indicators. In addition, school goals are determined numerically as seen by data to indicate that each year should show a 5% increase in English language arts and mathematics. As yet, the goals are not determined based on the content focus of the current data to ensure this increase. All school goals and high expectations are shared with the school community through a variety of meetings, newsletters and workshops. In addition, teachers send home a weekly progress report on what has been studied in the current week and individual goals student are working on. Unfortunately, currently parents are not aware of how to use the weekly progress report and students' individual goal setting to support their children at home. The parents did acknowledge the increased outreach to themselves to provide the school with information about the learning needs and capacities of their children.

Each grade level has a coach who also serves as the academic intervention teacher as well. Teachers work closely together to discuss progress and relevant data is consistently

used to identify needs and inform decisions about strategies for intervention. This structure has reduced student retention to relatively few students' school wide.

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 follows the mandated curriculum and ensures that this provides regular and pertinent data. The driving strength of instruction is the way that collaborative structures hold teachers accountable to each other and to the administration. A good example of this is the way students work and data is shared at grade level meetings and during one on one conferences with the administration. Teachers report that if one teachers' class has done significantly better on an assessment they all want to know what that teacher did to get those results. Absolute trust and honesty between all staff powers this close collaboration. There is a seamless sharing of ideas, planning, instruction and evaluation. The administrators participate in planning meetings and their high visibility throughout the school promotes good relationships. Differentiation of instruction in a number of subjects occurs in classrooms based on data generated from such as Acuity, running records and end of unit tests in math. Flexible groups are formed to support the deficient areas. Grade 5 has begun literature circles based on student reading levels. The groups are student led with each student knowing their job for the day. This structure is challenging the top readers as well as the others in the class. As yet, differentiation has not moved beyond the level of organization of groups based on item analysis to include challenge for higher achievers throughout the grades. There is inconsistent evidence of written student work around class work and investigations.

The art and music curriculum integrates with social studies and content themes. Many performances are held throughout the year directed and led by the staff at the school and supported by community partnerships. Each spring a major musical is produced and enjoyed by the entire school community. Parents regard the arts programs at the school as one of the strongest practices for improving students self esteem. The visual arts dominate the hallways on every floor displaying student work in all content areas.

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.

Professional development is an important priority school wide. Professional development decisions are based on frequent formal and informal observations by the administration and analysis of student and teacher needs. Teachers receive support for their own learning needs through the school's differentiated program of professional development. They are also given the opportunity to participate in study groups of their choice. However, currently there is no structure to provide professional development based on the school focus or grade level goals for the current year that is based on the New York State standards.

Teachers take the initiative to collaboratively arrange their own opportunities for inter and intra class visitations. In addition coaches and Aussie consultants present frequent lab

sites and workshops, to share ideas and good practice. Teachers reflect on one another's practice and discuss instituting the practice into their teaching. New teachers receive excellent support from the school mentor as well as their peer mentor.

The school runs very smoothly because efficient routines and procedures are well established and consistently implemented. An effective behavior management system is implemented throughout the school. Students are very familiar with this and, as a result, students behave very well, and are focused on working hard. Students report feeling very well supported by their teachers and administrators and parents echo those feelings.

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 administrators and the staff work collaboratively to develop the school's Comprehensive Education Plan. This guides the school's work and is regularly updated. As formal and informal assessment data are collected, teachers and staff developers, under the supervision of administration, revise goals. This provides for flexible adaptation of plans and practices to meet goals for accelerating learning. Teachers and staff developers make adjustments to the core curriculum as a result of how students are performing based on periodic data collection and informal observation. Administrators periodically check assessment data such as reading conference binders, math binders and weekly writing samples to inform instruction. Curriculum pacing calendars are reviewed and revised based on student performance outcomes gathered through periodic assessment. Choosing grade 4 special education students in the area of English language arts for the Inquiry Team work was an outgrowth of last year's cumulative data results.

The school has long-term goals to improve academic achievement. However, interim goals that are objectively measurable with benchmarks are not yet in place. Teachers informally set personal and academic goals at the beginning of the year and revisit the goals at the end of year with administrators. They do not have interim goals that are objectively measurable with suitable time frames to guide their progress or to ease adjustments to plans.

The whole school community shares the principal's vision for continually improving student outcomes in a caring and nurturing environment. The principal is strongly supported by the whole school community in her tireless efforts to ensure that the school continues to improve. This is ideally illustrated by one student who, when asked what they would improve in the school replied, "Nothing, the school is perfect the way it is".

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Joseph Rodman Drake 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