

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

Jim Thorpe School

Elementary – High School

**3000 West 1 Street
Brooklyn
NY 11224**

Principal: Susan Goldberg

Dates of review: May 4 – 6, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Sue Alton

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Jim Thorpe is an elementary-high school with 197 students from kindergarten through grade 12. The school population comprises 66% Black, 15% Hispanic, 14% White, and 5% Asian American students. The student body includes no English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 85% of the students enrolled and girls for 15%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 70.9%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

The school is a 12 months school for those students within the autistic spectrum or with emotional difficulties. High school students graduate with an individual education plan or a local diploma. Students attend in self-contained settings, inclusion classes, work-study programs or are integrated into mainstream classes with the support of paraprofessionals. A minority of students are eligible for the New York State Alternate Assessments. This year, the number of sites reduced from eight to six, reducing travel distances for students.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The principal provides strong leadership and is very well respected by the whole school community who work together very well towards a shared vision. As a result of this and the strong sense of teamwork, staff constantly review their practice in order to plan, set goals, improve instruction and ensure individual students meet their goals. Currently goals are set in English language arts, math, social studies, science and functional life skills. Goals are not set in other areas of the core curriculum.

Administration uses data effectively to analyze the performance of groups and identify trends and underachievement, although teachers are less confident in this approach. The wide range of data collected is meticulously recorded for individual students in teacher assessment binders. Current systems to summarize this information to ensure the effective and manageable transfer of data at the end of the year, to inform future goal setting, are cumbersome. Administration uses data effectively to maintain an overview of the school. However, they do not record it systematically to substantiate self evaluation. Although the Comprehensive Educational Plan identifies measurable long term goals, these are not always quantified, making progress difficult to measure. Interim goals are recorded as a series of actions. However, teachers' assessment binders contain detailed information of those targeted students who will receive intervention and support to achieve their goals and the long term goals in the whole school plan. Frequent tracking and discussion with administration provide an update of progress towards long term goals. However, this information is not collated and included in the school plan to provide a written strategic overview, on which to base decisions.

Behavior management systems are good, consistently applied and constantly reinforced, so that students understand the expectations. Parents value the good communication from the school and the opportunities for them to be involved, which they say helps them to further support their children at home. They attribute the progress their children make to the commitment of staff. One parent commented, "Teachers are very respectful of parents and love comes from them."

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides strong leadership and is very well respected by the whole school community and she has established a strong sense of team work, with a shared vision.
- Administration work as a cohesive team to review and analyze data in order to maintain an updated picture of student progress, to support planning and goal setting.
- Teachers work together effectively to gather a wide range of data which they use well to understand the progress of individual students and to set goals.
- Behavior management systems work well because they are clear, consistently applied and understood by students.
- The ethos of constant reflection and review in order to continually improve, supports students well towards achieving their goals.
- Parents speak unanimously, of the progress their children make because of the commitment of staff and good communication between home and school.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure the Comprehensive Educational Plan identifies specific and measurable interim goals in order to measure progress towards long term goals.
- Revise systems to record evaluation processes, including reference to a range of data to substantiate statements, to demonstrate the impact of strategies on student achievement and maintain a clear overview.
- Refine processes to make data more accessible and manageable to support teachers in identifying trends or underachievement and to facilitate transfer of information to inform future goal setting and planning.
- Extend the effective work in goal setting, data collection and review across all subject areas.

Part 3: Main Findings

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Good staff collaboration ensures a wide range of data is collected on individual students, which is recorded carefully in data binders. This provides an ongoing picture of individual student progress and areas of need over the year. New students are quickly integrated into the school as a result of immediate assessments and swift allocation of resources. Data is collected systematically in English language arts, math, science, social studies and independent life skills. However, the increasing amount of data collected, makes it difficult for staff to analyze overall trends and draw conclusions. To resolve this, the school is beginning to use computerized systems to maintain a clearer overview of trends and to identify any underachieving groups. The school's focus on continual improvement identified the need to consider proformas to summarize information and facilitate the transfer of information to inform goal setting in the following school year. These have now been completed in draft form.

Administration uses data systematically to analyze and track progress in subjects and by gender, to identify trends. As a result, girls' underachievement was identified. In response, resources to appeal to girls were purchased and staff organized targeted girls' activities. Lessons observed during the review, show that girls take full part in lessons and make appropriate progress towards their goals.

Students work closely with teachers and parents to discuss the goals in individual education plans. Progress towards these is checked in daily student/teacher conferences. Where appropriate, simple rubrics support students well in evaluating progress and understanding "next steps", which is an improvement since the last quality review. Parents appreciate receiving colorful photographic newsletters, celebrating student achievement. They enjoy special events such as Thanksgiving dinner where families celebrate with the whole school community. As a result of good communication, parents say they are more confident to continue the work of the school in their home.

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.

Goal setting focuses on individual students. In class, differentiation focuses effectively on individuals, groups and the adult support and services students receive. Individual education plans are reviewed annually and long term goals set in English language arts, life skills and math. Goals in science and social studies are maintained in teacher binders. Some goals within individual plans are too broad, but teachers do split these into smaller manageable goals, which they assess frequently to inform future planning.

Currently, however, this valuable information is not summarized at the end of the year to support future individual education planning, building on previous achievement. Overall, good collaboration between teachers, related services, parents and students ensure that goals are shared and closely related to need. However, sometimes, information relating to behavior in individual education plans is historical and does not portray an accurate, current picture of the student.

The Comprehensive Educational Plan is created in collaboration with the whole school community. As one teacher said, "We know what we're aiming for as a community." As a result, everyone understands their role in achieving school goals and this creates a strong sense of purpose throughout the school. The school plan contains measurable long term goals, relating to student achievement. The final outcome is unclear, however, because it is described as an overall increase. Short term goals refer to actions, but do not specify how these contribute to long-term goals. Despite this, the information in teachers' binders clearly identifies students targeted in the Comprehensive Educational Plan and their outcomes. Careful tracking and frequent discussions with administration provides an update of progress towards long term goals, but this information is not collated and included in the school plan to provide a written strategic overview, on which to base decisions.

Good attendance is very closely tracked and rewarded. Absences are followed up within a few hours. Administration use data to target students with the lowest attendance, often those who have transferred from other schools. As a result, attendance for some students improved by as much as 50%, although the overall school attendance remains low. Students speak enthusiastically about the support the parent coordinator gives to them and their families and about his friendly approach. Parents speak very highly of the dedication of the principal and staff. They comment on the impact of the school's high expectations for all students. One parent spoke proudly of how the good work of the school, meant her child would be graduating this year.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students' learning goals.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school aligns the curriculum to New York State standards, modified to meet the needs of students. Most teachers differentiate instruction effectively for individuals and groups to meet the wide range of student needs. For example, in a mini-lesson in literacy, the swift pace, links to previous learning, carefully differentiated questioning and the good subject knowledge of the teacher engaged all students very well in the text. This resulted in good student understanding, engagement and progress. Specialist teachers in dance and music provide varied, motivational opportunities for students to develop their skills through practical activities. Frequent field trips enhance the curriculum very well. One student spoke excitedly about the view from the Statue of Liberty, despite the number of stairs he needed to climb!

Administration analyzes data carefully to identify school needs. As a result, new technology was purchased to support a targeted group in reading and mathematics. Analysis of the success of these programs, led to wider use across the school. Teachers appreciate the range of resources available to them to support them in delivering instruction which engages and supports students in achieving their goals.

Clear and consistent behavior expectations result in a calm working environment. Staff volunteer to meet weekly to discuss the behavior improvement program and share case studies. These opportunities to discuss concerns, share effective strategies, working with an outside specialist contributes to the consistent approach to improving behavior. Staff provide very good role models and relationships are very good. Students enjoy learning and feel safe. One student said, "We all know each other. It's a small school and there is always someone to turn to if we have a problem." Most staff can anticipate student reactions and know whether to intervene or to give the student time alone, whilst maintaining a watchful eye. As a result, students quickly re-engage with their learning.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Teachers value support from administration and colleagues, resulting in a continual review of practice to improve instruction. Teachers' professional development plans are being realigned to New York professional teaching standards to provide a clear framework and consistency. Teachers new to the school or profession are very enthusiastic about the good range of support they receive from administration and colleagues, which enables them to settle quickly, develop their expertise and adapt to the expectations of the school.

The inquiry approach is new to the school and staff are still developing skills in analyzing data for groups to identify overall trends and hypothesize. One teacher described how "We have not yet reached the stage of generalizing and looking at the overall impact of the project. We are still focusing on individuals." Last year, the inquiry team used data to identify a target group of students underachieving in reading and developed strategies to support improvement. The progress of individuals was carefully tracked. However, no overall evaluation was carried out to identify the most successful strategies, or why 30% of the targeted group did not make sufficient progress. Therefore, the opportunity for the work of the inquiry team to impact on whole school practice was limited. This year, the reading focus remains, but the project is extending to high school students. As a result of discussions to improve the effectiveness of the project, there is to be an increased focus on using data to establish a baseline and wider use of computerized systems to facilitate analysis of overall impact.

The increased focus on "push in" services provides good opportunities for professionals to work together to support student needs as well as providing additional good professional development opportunities for teachers. A strong sense of teamwork permeates the school. Teachers say their ideas are valued by administration and they enjoy being involved in decision making, resulting in a common purpose where all staff are striving to improve their practice to achieve school goals. One member of staff said, "This school is my purpose for getting up in the morning. I love it. When I see one small step of progress, I'm choked and know that I'm making a difference."

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

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Good systems are in place to maintain a careful picture of the progress of individual students against their targets throughout the year and to make adjustments. Most teachers consider data carefully to plan differentiated instruction for individuals and groups. Student progress is recorded consistently in teachers' assessment binders, to support information in individual education plans. Administration analyzes and maintains a good range of data to track the progress of individuals and groups and use this effectively to take action. An example of this is the decision to focus on English language arts in the Comprehensive Education Plan.

School goals are created collaboratively and the principal distributes leadership successfully at all levels. The Comprehensive Education Plan identifies long term goals relating to student achievement. These relate to a numerical gain, but there is no clarity about what this will look like in terms of progress from baseline. Overall short term goals are not specified in this plan, making progress towards long term goals difficult to measure. Self evaluation is a whole school process. The school knows its strengths and areas for development accurately. However, the self evaluation document does not make links to quantifiable data to explain the judgments it makes.

The well respected principal encourages staff to self reflect and share in the formation of ideas and strategies. Because of this, staff work as a dedicated team, committed to the vision of raising student achievement. The principal articulates the vision as wanting students to "Become independent and transfer what is learned in school to the world, so that they know how to listen, be responsible and productive in the system." As one teacher said, "I know I've achieved my goal when I've helped them to achieve theirs."

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Jim Thorpe School	△	▶	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	△	▶	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?			X	
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?			X	
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?			X	
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?			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 student’s learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	△	▶	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?			X	
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			X	
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?			X	
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYQ, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

To what extent do ...	Δ	➤	✓	+
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?			X	
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?			X	
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?			X	
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				
X				

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent do school leaders...	Δ	➤	✓	+
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?			X	
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?			X	
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?			X	
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4				
X				

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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 and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?		X		
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?			X	
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?			X	
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				
X				

Quality Review Scoring Key							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed