

Quality Review

Report

2008-2009

Joseph Pulitzer School

Intermediate School 145

33-34 80 Street
Queens
NY 11372

Principal: Dolores Beckham

Dates of review: May 21 - 22, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Frank Jones

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Joseph Pulitzer School is an intermediate school with 1880 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 3% Black, 86% Hispanic, 2% White, and 9% Asian students. The student body includes 25% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 94.4%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 80% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

The Joseph Pulitzer Intermediate is a well developed school which demonstrates a continuing upward trend in the performance and progress of its students. The intelligent and detailed analysis of a wealth of data enables the school to maintain an accurate picture of what each student knows, understands and the skills they have mastered. Effective use is made of this information by the majority of teachers to identify short term learning targets and to promote both academic and social progress. Teacher understanding and use of data to refine long term goal setting and realign instruction is a good and developing feature of the school as they strive to further increase the quality and depth of student learning. Teaching ranges from satisfactory to good and, on occasion, outstanding across the school. In classes where work is differentiated to meet student need and tasks build on prior learning to challenge the high achievers to think critically and apply their knowledge, then their potential is maximized. At times some high performing students spend too much time supporting those with lower ability or engaged in insufficiently demanding activities which slows their progress.

This is very much a community where all consider themselves learners. Therefore, teachers are eager to access the extensive range of high quality professional development that is offered to them. In addition, inter-visitations enable teachers to share, observe and benefit from the very good practice that is available within the school. The extensive curriculum is relevant and has a significant impact on student knowledge and the interest that they exhibit in the tasks they are given. This is especially true in the numerous cases when opportunities to apply learning through real-life connections bring increased relevance and understanding to student development. The school exhibits a mutually and extremely supportive culture. This manifests itself in the exceptionally good relationships which are prevalent between all school constituents. The stimulating learning environment reflects high quality work and an education particularly rich in opportunity and experiences.

Parents recognize and acknowledge that this is a good school with many extremely positive qualities. They are grateful for and appreciative of the high level of detailed communication and support they receive which enables them to understand and share their child's educational experiences. The principal is extremely passionate that all students deserve and are entitled to the highest quality of education that can be provided for them. Her exceptional commitment is shared by her assistant principals who function effectively as individuals and, as they become empowered, are developing into a formidable team.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has extremely effective systems for gathering and analyzing individual student and group data which enables staff to track and maintain a detailed picture of their progress and performance.
- Teachers set relevant goals with and for students and identify short-term learning targets to support and promote the school's high expectations for academic and social progress.
- The mutually supportive and extremely purposeful culture that pervades the school is reflected in exceptionally good relationships and a learning environment that is particularly rich in quality and experiences.
- The range of apposite professional development opportunities for teachers is readily grasped and confirms the view that this is very much a reflective learning community.
- Parents are grateful for and appreciative of the high level of detailed communication they receive, which enables them to understand and share their child's educational experiences.
- Teachers and leaders ensure that students greatly benefit from a relevant, varied and enriching curriculum that includes opportunities to apply learning through real-life connections.
- The principal's passion to ensure that all students receive a high quality education that will prepare them to take their place as valuable and contributing members of society is shared by staff and the wider community.

What the school needs to improve

- Build on the very good examples, prevalent in the school, to support those staff where differentiated instruction is not embedded in their practice to consistently provide tasks that build on students' prior learning.
- Further improve teacher understanding and use of data to refine goal setting, realign instruction where required and use this information as an effective tool to increase their impact on student learning.
- Ensure that high achieving students are constantly and consistently challenged through effective questioning and planned activities to expand students' thinking and so maximize their learning.

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 well developed.

The school gathers an extensive range of data provided by State tests and that generated by the school. This information is carefully analyzed to provide a clear picture of the progress and performance of each student. This information is shared with students who are therefore able to assess their progress and use the information to further raise their progress. The data specialist charts and graphs the information which enables weekly detailed interrogation by the instructional team. They in turn use the results of their analysis to have discussions with academies, grades and subjects or, where required, individual teachers. The use of ARIS and Acuity provides additional analysis which the school is beginning to use extremely effectively as predictive measures of performance. On-going teacher assessments provide a daily picture of knowledge and skills acquisition which further inform the regular conferencing that takes place. Teachers and students consequently work in close harmony, supported by clear direction through intelligent use of all available data. Teachers are operating at differing levels of data use but all display a good understanding of its potential. Many teachers refine and align both the curriculum and their teaching as a direct consequence of the results of the analyses they have undertaken. This ensures that the pace of progress is rigorous.

Exceptionally good analysis is undertaken to monitor the progress of sub-groups and different ethnicities. The school is able to illustrate a trend in progress and isolate the factors that impact on student performance. English language learners (ELL) are the predominant population in the school. Many have tested out and demonstrate adequate proficiency. The school however recognizes that this is just the beginning of proficiency and works hard and successfully to further increase these students' command and ability to communicate at a high level. Further disaggregation of ELL data takes place by giving cognizance to length of time in the country, previous educational experience and where in Latin America the students come from. This extensive analysis of variable factors underpins the good progress students make in the school. Parents recognize the efforts made by the school to provide a good education for their children. They are even more pleased that the frequent detailed communication streams allow them to be part of the learning process. Regular report cards, progress reports and more informal emails and phone calls enable parents to share with and understand the educational journey of their child.

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.

To focus effort at all levels, leaders, teachers and students work within a goal centered learning environment. In this way, students set and review their individual goals, with assistance from teachers. Longer term goals reflect aspirations and so maintain a

careful eye on the bigger picture. Within annual goals, particularly for English language arts and math, systematic monthly targets and interim monitoring means students and teachers review incremental steps toward raising achievement. The quality of students' goals varies, so some have more efficient measurability indicators than others. Mindful of different groups within the student population and their varying needs, teachers and leaders set suitable goals for disciplines and grades across all academies. These result from strong collaboration by staff, including guidance counselors. To improve the outcomes for those students who find academics particularly challenging, teachers valuably devise additional action plans for at least five students within their class. This is proving effective in focusing efforts on closing the achievement gap. In the frequent scheduled meetings, teachers and administrators collaborate well, examining student work and assessments. Through review and analysis of all relevant information, school needs are prioritized and provide the basis of the Comprehensive Educational Plan. This rightly focuses on improving student outcomes in math, English language arts, further parental participation and full implementation of the *Professional Teaching Standards*. The school's impressive aim for all students to be achieving level 3 or 4 by 2014, demonstrates the strategic thinking, commitment and longer-term vision in practice.

Teachers hold themselves accountable for improving student outcomes, but administrators maintain a rigorous comparative oversight at all levels. This ensures that each teacher and academy is performing to the highest standards. A robust attendance policy results in immediate action to rectify any perceived slippage. This means that parents and students understand the correlation between attendance and achievement. Similarly, regular reports and open access to teachers and administrators ensures a continual exchange of information between families and the school, which supports student learning. Programs to support students through transition, including scholarship applications for high schools, form an integral and practical part of assuring long-term goal realization. The emphasis on cultural diversity and celebration throughout the school heightens awareness of equal value, enhancing social skills. Colorful displays of high quality student work enhance the learning environment and, with performances and assemblies, serve as excellent reminders, recognition and exemplars for students. Leaders rightly consult students on issues such as incentives for positive behaviors. In this way, students have input into decision-making and develop a sense of communal accountability.

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 well developed.

Students truly benefit from an extensive range of learning opportunities within a broad based curriculum which is aligned to State standards. All academies provide access for students of all abilities to the core curriculum, with particular programs reflecting identified student need. Students are taught in either heterogeneous or homogeneous classes. In this way, teachers meet the individual education plan goals of special education students in self-contained or less restrictive environments. Students profit from the only dual language Spanish program in Queens, following the same engaging curriculum as their peers. Wide-ranging school-wide enrichment opportunities enhance students' learning and offer alternative ways of experiencing success. In this way, students follow programs such as cinematography, drama and the successful competitive ballroom dancing program. With extended day opportunities, such as

Princeton and Kaplan studies, and clubs including Greek, cheerleading and chess, students have unparalleled opportunities for learning in the broadest sense. Consequently, students enjoy coming to school and are enthusiastic learners.

Through regular assessments and knowing students well within the small learning communities, teachers initiate timely interventions as required. Pupil personnel team and other meetings swiftly identify students for supplementary educational services, or support with social and emotional needs. Grade level meetings develop differentiated activities to meet varied needs, with particular reference to reading and math scores. Students enjoy utilizing known skills in real life connections. At these times activities have increased relevance which results in accelerated progress. The science fair exemplifies the high quality work of the articulate students, who hypothesize and conduct fair tests to investigate their chosen topic. Lessons that harness technology as an instructional and learning tool motivate and engage students. Students in an exceptional math lesson demonstrated technical and math competencies in planning, research and analysis, resulting in a PowerPoint presentation. Although all teachers show great dedication and enthusiasm, there is insufficient challenge in some lessons, especially for the higher achieving students to extend their thinking.

Throughout the school, respectful interpersonal relationships between all constituents ensure that students feel safe and comfortable, so work in harmony with peers and adults. Clearly understood rules, routines, procedures and structures mean that this oversubscribed school runs smoothly despite the large numbers of students. This results in a calm, purposeful learning environment.

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 well developed.

Instructional leaders know staff strengths well as a result of regular lesson observations, walkthroughs and professional meetings. All teachers have developed individual professional growth plans, rooted in the *Professional Teaching Standards*. Valuable feedback and support from administrators helps staff to build capacity. Teachers are, in their own words, "dedicated to lifelong learning," which equally holds true for administrators. In this way the reflective professional community works together collegially to hone their skills in order to improve student outcomes. The instructional team meets weekly to plan research-based professional development for meeting identified school and teacher needs. Accordingly, one correctly identified priority is the enhancement of all teachers' effective differentiation skills. Professional growth is encouraged and supported through weekly training sessions, supplemented by external and internal development opportunities. Two full-time teacher mentors, lead teachers and the "buddy" teacher system attest to the strong program that supports new and seasoned teachers within the school. Teachers are empowered to develop as professionals, so make valued contributions to meetings and teams. In building capacity and deepening reflective practice, the intervisitation model is extremely effective. This demonstrates teachers' courage, mutual support and desire to grow professionally, guided by senior staff.

Analysis of the performance of the target group that the inquiry team worked effectively with during the previous academic year, has demonstrated that value has been added to student performance as a result of the work undertaken. Professional development was provided so that all staff could confidently implement the use of writing frames to

enhancing student writing. This has been further extended to look at writing across the curriculum to ensure that language is contextualized and subject appropriate. One notable feature of the school is its holistic support for students and families. Students and parents access valuable support for physical and mental wellness through on-site clinics. Guidance services form an integral part of the students' school experience. Other partners that contribute significantly to students' academic, social and emotional growth include LifeNet Counseling, Project Share and the Victory Theater. Links with the Fulbright Exchange program, St John's University, Cornell University and New York Hall of Science, similarly enrich the curriculum and students' experience. For many families the opportunities provided prove life-changing. Parents, for example, glory in technological and other skills acquired as a result of school initiated workshops and programs.

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 well developed.

The weekly meeting of the instructional team provides a valuable opportunity to monitor and examine student progress. Issues that arise are swiftly dealt with through apposite interventions. This ensures that all students' goals are realigned as required and progress towards them tracked. Students who are not making the pace of progress previously planned are immediately supported through additional teaching after school or during the Saturday 'cram' session. Similarly the goals contained in the CEP are equally fastidiously monitored. This rigor provides purpose and direction to the school and wider community, all of whom are kept well informed. This is a highly evaluative school at all levels. Students assess their own progress as do teachers and administrators. Importantly this high quality understanding throughout the school results in informed decisions about the curriculum and programs. Teachers then modify them to ensure they reflect student needs. This cohesive and holistic approach is a positive feature of the school, that all constituents understand and subscribe to.

Because the school has an in depth knowledge of itself it is consistently pro-active rather than reactive in its decision making. This results in well informed strategic planning which has its basis in improving student outcomes. Therefore initiatives are planned to enhance the education that the school offers. A classic example of this has been the introduction and effective use of a range of information technology. This has had a huge impact on the quality of curriculum delivery and the range of tools available to students to present their work, explore learning opportunities and engage in research. The principal is passionate in her belief that every student, irrespective of their ability, background or ethnicity has a right to the best education that the school can provide. This acts as a tremendous driving force within the school as all concerned are enthused by and share this vision. Equity is paramount, rather than equality so each student is treated as a valued individual with specific and particular needs that have to be addressed if they are to meet with success. Through their rigorous and focused professional expertise, the principal, skilled administrators and energetic staff are ensuring that students maximize their potential through the acquisition of knowledge and skills that will prepare them for life.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Joseph Pulitzer Intermediate School	Δ	➤	✓	+
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>	Δ	➤	✓	+
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>	Δ	➤	✓	+
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.

<i>To what extent do ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
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.

<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
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.

<i>To what extent do ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
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

△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed
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