



**Department of  
Education**

*Joel I. Klein, Chancellor*

**Quality Review Report  
Office of Accountability  
2008-2009**

# **Quality Review Report 2008-2009**

**The Senator John J. Calandra School**

**Elementary School 014  
3401 Bruckner Boulevard  
Bronx  
NY 10461**

**Principal: Jason Kovac**

**Dates of review: February 24-25, 2009**

**Lead Reviewer: Dov Rokeach**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Senator John J. Calandra School is an elementary school with 528 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 4% Black, 55% Hispanic, 36% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 93.3%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is well developed.**

Under the leadership of its principal, who is completing his first year, the school has developed a variety of assessment tools to examine the needs of students and to accelerate their learning. The consistent use of such data arising ensures that teachers, students and parents are constantly aware of the important learning needs that are required to meet and exceed standards. "It is amazing how we are able to individualize and find the strengths and weaknesses of each individual child," explained a teacher when discussing the school's use of data. Positively, each student has a regularly updated interim student action plan that delineates the next steps for teachers and students as well as for parents who are eager to augment and enrich the learning of their children at home.

All classroom teachers maintain and use comprehensive assessment binders to promote differentiated instruction in the classroom aligned to available curriculum maps and syllabi in all core subject areas. Student goals, generated from individualized student data, are highly public and teachers, parents and students are very aware of students' next steps. Data in the school profiles does not sufficiently identify progress trends of various subgroups across core content areas and as such the school is currently unable to fully identify what exactly is affecting these students' performance. At present the school does not have a computer generated student profile to facilitate and aid teachers in the revision of student goals throughout the school year. As a result, differentiated teaching that considers the interdisciplinary connectivity of work in core content areas is made more difficult and not yet common practice.

The school's effective use of very sophisticated organizational structures, introduced this past year, keeps parents, students, and teachers well informed about student learning. The principal meets daily with individual teachers to discuss and analyze specific data to support the identification of targeted strategies designed to address individualized student needs. However, the school does not yet fully analyze the outcomes of all subgroups in the development of lessons to meet the needs of all student groupings.

Teachers express enthusiasm for the regular support that helps them prepare lessons and have come to recognize the sense of community and camaraderie that have emerged at the school. The school has established a risk-free environment as illustrated by comments such as, "I have never had a problem going to anyone for help," and, "Goals help create a sense of motivation and accomplishment when students achieve their goals."

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal has established a collaborative and mutually supportive school community that is sharply focused on accelerating students' learning.
- The school's comprehensive and effective use of data, to communicate high expectations and to establish next learning steps, enables students to reach their goals.
- A positive school tone, augmented by excellent internal and external programs, supports the academic and personal growth of students.
- The school has designed a wide variety of tools that helps teachers and administration understand what students know and to monitor their progress.
- Parents are regularly informed of their child's performance and progress and use this data to accelerate the learning of their children.
- All teachers embrace the sustained internal and external professional development to strengthen their instructional practices.
- The school has established a variety of effective structures to evaluate the effectiveness of the teacher and student goal-setting processes and to make adjustments when necessary.

### What the school needs to improve

- Extend the data collection and analysis systems and practices to focus on progress trends to assist planning to raise the performance of all subgroups.
- Integrate the goal-setting process for all subjects into a comprehensive profile to aid all teachers in the regular revision of student learning goals.
- Examine the data in all core subjects to enable teachers to plan and teach lessons that emphasize interdisciplinary connections.

## 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's use of a comprehensive range of data promotes a view of the learning needs of students. This data leads directly to the development of specific goals for individuals. All classroom teachers maintain and use comprehensive assessment binders to understand what students know and to identify next steps. Students are acutely aware of many of their own learning goals and their past and present reading levels. The school has not yet developed a fully systematic approach to augment the ability of the school to plan for the unique learning requirements of some subgroups. This is especially so where they relate to the connections among core content areas. The school is unable to clearly demonstrate if performance of the various subgroups, such as in math is related to performance in another for instance, English language arts.

Carefully designed communication structures ensure that students, families, teachers and administration consistently receive important information about learning needs, student outcomes, and attendance results. Interim action plans for each student, teacher, grade, and the school, empower school leaders to analyze individual student performance and inform decisions about instruction and organization. The principal and assistant principal continuously review these plans and use them to accelerate students' learning. Regular data meetings, conducted by the principal and assistant principal, ensure that each teacher has an opportunity to discuss each student's growth on a bi-weekly basis.

The school effectively communicates with families through a wide range of processes. Parents are pleased with the ongoing interaction and express enthusiasm as exemplified by a parent's comment that, "Communication with teachers is incredible."

**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's emphasis on the development of student-specific goals, in all core content areas, is central to its highly effective communication. Parents and students receive ongoing and consistent feedback designed to identify next learning steps and to identify content specific strategies to accelerate learning. Parents and teachers work enthusiastically and collaboratively to examine the progress of students and revise goals when supported by the data. However, the lack of an integrated profile of all student goals and data somewhat inhibits the ability of the school to assess interim goals and benchmarks that connect the progress of students across core content areas.

The school leadership team meets regularly, and effectively uses data to identify school priorities and to prepare the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan. Team leaders and grade leaders meet frequently to examine data that informs the next round of goal setting. The administration meets regularly with teachers to review goals and to suggest alternate strategies when individual students are not making the desired progress. These highly focused dialogues enable each teacher to have a one-on-one meeting on a bi-weekly basis throughout the school year. Teachers express enthusiasm for this support and recognize that these meetings "are to help accelerate student learning."

The school constantly reminds students of the importance of knowing and understanding their specific goals through morning meetings conducted by the administration and by pasting of goals on students' desks, postings on bulleting boards and interim student action plans. Classroom teachers regularly schedule student conferences in class and by telephone, in order to review, assess, and adjust student goals. This exceptional focus is particularly evident in the content areas of English language arts and math.

**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.**

The school aligns its curriculum with State standards in all core subject areas. Curriculum maps in English language arts, the effective use of Everyday Math, and course syllabi in science, social studies, technology, and art enable the school to offer a rigorous and wide-ranging program to accelerate the learning of all students. Teachers have an effective assessment system held in comprehensive binders that include data from periodic assessments, benchmark testing, running records, and student conference and more informal notes. However, the use of the wide variety of data to support the delivery of supplemental instructional programs, such as English as a second language, is not always apparent and the planning and instruction do not sufficiently take into account some specific learning needs of this subgroup. Furthermore, the school does not yet sufficiently examine student progress across all content areas, compromising the school's ability to adjust the curriculum and plan lessons that emphasize interdisciplinary connections.

Classroom environments indicate an effective balanced instructional approach. Student libraries, organized by reading level and genre, promote student engagement and the selection of appropriate reading material. Students are remarkably aware of their progress in English language arts and are able to articulate their next learning steps. The highly visible student work that includes meaningful teacher feedback, based upon established rubrics, helps to accelerate student learning. Classroom environments support student self-assessment through the deliberate and planned collaboration between students.

Parents enthusiastically appreciate the support their children receive from the staff and administration. "The help that my child receives is phenomenal," exclaimed a parent of a student with a disability. The school's highly effective after-school programs and academic-intervention programs assist the learning and personal growth of students.

**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.**

The strategic use of data supports a continuous cycle of inquiry to promote the identification of successful practices and enables teachers to deliver effective instruction. The school uses individual teacher profiles to identify personal professional development opportunities. Detailed individualized professional development plans for teachers form the core of a highly deliberate and focused plan to impact positively upon student learning. A similarly effective mentoring program supports the growth of newly assigned teachers. Outside supports augment the professional development opportunities available. The school has developed an effective core inquiry team that has led to the expansion and deepening of inquiry. School structures, such as monthly grade conferences, monthly staff conferences, network and school retreats allow teachers to take a leadership role in curriculum development, professional development, and the organizational design of the school. The school makes final decisions after a thorough review and analysis of objective data and the school's overall goals.

The principal and assistant principal frequently visit classrooms observe classroom teachers to assess instruction. Teachers view these visits as instructive and supportive of their efforts to accelerate learning for all students. The expansion of teacher study groups, common preparation periods, grade leader meetings, and one-on-one meetings with the administration effectively encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise classroom practices. Weekly grade-leader meetings, to study the work of students who are struggling, promote the identification of targeted interventions for implementation and follow up discussion. Frequent one-on-one meetings with the principal and assistant principal align the progress of individual groups of students with differentiated professional development.

The school has a variety of supports designed to accelerate the personal and academic growth of students. An active-child study team reviews existing data of struggling students and identifies specific in-class and external interventions when appropriate. After-school programs augment and enrich the arts and physical education programs. Although time consuming and laborious, the school effectively makes timely revisions to the student's academic and personal support program through the constant communication between teachers and parents. A comprehensive safety net exists to promote the progress of all students at the school.

**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 school's highly effective and frequent use of interim checkpoints promotes the revision of student learning plans throughout the school year. The school uses formative and summative data, attendance records, and teacher-identified data to evaluate progress for individual students, grades and school plans. The administration, teachers, students, and parents use the interim student action plans to make timely improvements in student learning goals when necessary. The school regularly analyzes interim progress data to evaluate, and modify when necessary, the organizational structures of the school.

The analysis of the school's Progress Report led to specific professional development in grades 4 and 5, a school-wide direct instruction initiative, and to an enrichment program. The school's success with the departmentalization of grade 5 into humanities and math/science clusters has led to plans to replicate this structure in grade 4.

Teacher feedback and input, central to the school's culture, has led to important enhancements and modifications in the school's curriculum. Professional development for teachers in the areas of writing and effective use of Everyday Math is based upon identified need and through analysis of data. The eagerness to examine the wide variety of collected data supports the emergence of a strong and embedded culture of ongoing inquiry. However, the lack of an integrated database of the wide variety of data collected and analyzed makes the task of the regular revision of goals and curriculum design somewhat cumbersome and time-consuming.

The principal's dynamic and supportive leadership style has led to the establishment of a highly effective and mutually supportive learning community. The school's self-evaluation, developed with input from all stakeholders, includes an honest assessment of school practices. As a result, all understand the coherent and motivational vision of excellence that exists for students. The excellent participation in parent-association meetings and in the school leadership team supports this vision. All students, parents, and teachers appreciate the camaraderie, risk-free environment, and targeted support available in the school. The goal of strengthening teaching to accelerate student learning has become a mantra, as evidenced by the following statement from a teacher, "In taking the time to prepare assessment binders, I am able to help students."

## School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

|  |   |   |          |          |
|--|---|---|----------|----------|
| <b>School name: The Senator John J. Calandra School</b>  | △ | ▷ | ✓        | +        |
| <b>Overall QR Score</b>  |   |   |          | <b>X</b> |
| <b>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.</b>      |   |   |          |          |
| <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?  |   |   |          | <b>X</b> |
| 1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?   |   |   | <b>X</b> |          |
| 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?  |   |   |          | <b>X</b> |
| 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? |   |   |          | <b>X</b> |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>   |   |   |          | <b>X</b> |
| <b>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.</b>  |   |   |          |          |
| <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?             |   |   | <b>X</b> |          |
| 2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?  |   |   |          | <b>X</b> |
| 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?  |   |   | <b>X</b> |          |
| 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?   |   |   |          | <b>X</b> |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>   |   |   | <b>X</b> |          |

### 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, DYO, 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.

| <b>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.</b>   |                       |   |  |          |                   |   |                       |
|--|-----------------------|---|--|----------|-------------------|---|-----------------------|
| <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        |                   |   |                       |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>   |                       |   |  | <b>X</b> |                   |   |                       |
| <b>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.</b>   |                       |   |  |          |                   |   |                       |
| <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        |                   |   |                       |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>   |                       |   |  | <b>X</b> |                   |   |                       |
| <b>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.</b>  |                       |   |  |          |                   |   |                       |
| <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        |                   |   |                       |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>   |                       |   |  | <b>X</b> |                   |   |                       |
| <b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>  |                       |   |  |          |                   |   |                       |
| △  | <b>Underdeveloped</b> | ▷ | <b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b> | ✓        | <b>Proficient</b> | + | <b>Well Developed</b> |