

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

John Ericsson Middle School

Middle School 126

424 Leonard Street

Brooklyn

NY 11222

Principal: Rosemary Ochoa

Dates of review: March 3 - 4, 2009

Lead Reviewer: James Quail

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

John Ericsson School is a middle school with 479 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 16% Black, 73% Hispanic, 8% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 89.6%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 66% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Under the leadership of the new principal, the school is focused on priorities set in the well supported Comprehensive Educational Plan, which was discussed with a wide range of stakeholders. The leader of the school is highly respected by the teachers, parents and students. One student stated, "Give the principal a reward for her work here in the school."

The school's vision is centered on the information, advice and input that the leader collected from various constituents when she arrived at the school last summer. Parents and students indicate that the current school year is much better due to the changes that the new leaders have initiated. These include additional supports for families and extensive after school programs for students. There are effective professional development opportunities available for teachers. One teacher stated, "I have had more professional development support this year than in all my fifteen years here in this building." The school has three inquiry teams in place for this year and they are proving effective in making inquiry the normal practice for each staff member. The inquiry teams are centered on monitoring pupil progress for targeted groups of children and then sharing their findings with the entire faculty.

The new assistant principals work collaboratively with the principal as they focus their efforts on goal setting, differentiated instruction and pupil progress, connecting these to their formal and informal observation process. The school effectively uses the recommendations made in their last Quality Review which ensures that the school focus is on improving learning, centered with the setting and use of goals and differentiated instruction.

The leadership is aware that they need to revisit the school's professional development plan and to set priorities with realistic timelines so that the work is more focused and concentrated. The same planning is required for development of the provision for special education students and English language learners. In addition, the use of student goal setting is underway in the school but there is more to be done in this area to provide for and reflect systemic use in the school. New teachers receive specific and continuous support via workshops, mentors, outside consultants and consultation with the leader of the school. The school intends to continue to work on developing positive student behavior, especially in the hallways and to actively and consistently engage school safety agents in this process. One student stated, "We do not need more safety agents, we need better trained ones."

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- There is a clear vision set for the school that is understood by the members of the school community and this ensures that the stakeholders understand the work that needs to be done towards school improvement.
- The principal and the instructional cabinet exhibit friendly, collaborative and positive relationships as they focus on learning, setting plans related to differentiation of instruction, student goal setting and discipline.
- The school uses their progress report, Quality Review, learning environment survey, unit tests, student work, attendance, and disciplinary data to evaluate progress and to plan for school wide improvements.
- The school works in partnership with families to provide consistent and valued personal, social and academic support for them.
- The school uses a variety of data in English language arts, math and physical education to inform their organizational and instructional decisions.
- Two new assistant principals work closely with the principal and connect their efforts to develop the school's professional development initiatives to the formal and informal observations of classroom instruction.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop systems to closely monitor the progress of all sub-groups, particularly English language learners and special education students.
- Ensure that goal setting is evident in all classrooms and subjects so that all students are aware of their achievements and their next learning steps.
- Continue to focus on and enrich the improvement of student discipline and positive behavior.
- Formalize the school's professional development plan to focus on developing the talents of staff through personalized programs and support.

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.

In implementing its attendance plan, the school increased attendance from 89.6% to 91.7% last year. The attendance plan is well considered and comprehensive, reflecting the actions, timelines and responsibilities needed to guide the school in this process. There is an abundance of data collected for student progress in math, English language arts and physical education, which support general education and subject teachers in assessing the needs of their students. In terms of meeting the needs of English language learners and special education students however, the school does not yet have an action plan focused on the curriculum, timelines, supports and use of resources required to meet the varied needs of these children. As a result, these subgroups are not achieving as well as they should be.

Parents and the school community receive monthly calendars and newsletters informing them of pupil progress, school events, workshops and activities thus giving them many opportunities to be engaged in their children's learning. One parent in the school gave support to the fact that parents now come to meetings and workshops when she stated, "Now, parents are more engaged in the school and take part in it."

Teachers use a variety of data tools in the school such as ARIS, periodic assessment, design your own assessments, student work, unit tests, and the use of items from previous examinations. Data collection is thus well established, although using this information to plan differentiated lessons to meet the needs of individuals and groups is not yet consistent across the school. There are however some particularly effective examples of the use of data; for example, in the 7th grade math program where students set SMART goals based on teacher direction and then receive timely assistance in addressing and remedying their deficiencies. This is not however consistent across all grades or in each subject area. Not all students can articulate their curriculum goals or clearly understand the steps that they will need to take to achieve them.

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 principal and the instructional cabinet work effectively together as they collaborate and plan to meet school priorities centered on goal setting, differentiated instruction, conferencing and improving student behavior. These priorities are evident in the Comprehensive Educational Plan. This work is proving particularly effective in improving the tone of the building and in developing instructional practice, as mentioned by several stakeholders. The plan is securely based on data analysis and is monitored closely.

There is a clear relationship between planning and practice in this school which impacts positively on school improvement. The school is aware however that there is some way to go and is continuing to work with the staff on the setting of SMART goals. At present, although proficiency goals are set for English language arts and math, goal setting practice is inconsistent across the school and not all teachers monitor the progress of their students carefully enough to identify the precise next steps each must take to secure their learning or the expected timescales for achievement. As a result, student progress is variable between classes and curriculum subjects. Some pockets of good practice are evident, for example the 'Reaching High' plan for eighth graders and the school continues to develop this area of their work.

School-wide goals are displayed throughout the school in classrooms and hallways and are well understood by the whole community. This practice ensures that high expectations for success are shared by all stakeholders.

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 students, staff and parents spoke about their support for the principal and the mission she has spearheaded in the school since her arrival last summer. This positive and trusting relationship enables the school to concentrate its efforts toward learning and gathers buy in from stakeholders. One teacher spoke about the fact that she feels very comfortable in speaking with the principal on any school related matter since she feels the leader cares about placing learning first in the school. It is evident that students remain the central focus of the school in their efforts to sustain positive self esteem in a caring and nurturing atmosphere. This year, the school has been reorganized into themed academies with business and media electives. These are designed to foster strong relationships within small learning communities and to support academic growth. Parents, teachers and students all talked positively about the difference that this arrangement has made.

The curriculum is standards based and is selected to provide flexibility in order that student's varied needs can be met. The school utilizes a wide array of external supports and organizations that are very effective in providing for the specific and varied needs of students and families. These external services include Studio in a School, Publicolor, a family art therapist, Beacon, Supreme Evaluations, chess club, robotics and 'academic olympics'. Students and parents mentioned that they welcome and enjoy these programs and that their interest and engagement in all school activities has increased as more options become available. These activities provide an opportunity to stimulate learning by offering multiple pathways and choices for students and provide examples of using differentiated programs to meet student interests and needs via extended day opportunities. In addition, the school has introduced 'Renzulli Learning', SMART boards and laptops to extend the use of technology and to respond to the varied learning styles of the students in some classes. These programs are not yet available for all students although the principal, pleased with the success of the scheme to date, intends to increase opportunities in the future.

As a result of the school focus, more teachers use data to differentiate their lessons by planning work to meet the specific needs of individuals and groups. Currently, although

there are examples of good practice, differentiated lessons are not used consistently across the school. In some lessons, students are not challenged sufficiently while others find their work too hard. Administrators are aware that this is a work in progress.

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.

The principal has adopted the Professional Teaching Standards system to support the school wide priority of continuously improving the quality of instruction. The principal provides opportunities for its assistant principals to use their talents and skills in the observation process to support and develop school priorities in promoting differentiated instruction. Coaches play a key role in focusing efforts on differentiated learning, particularly in math and literacy. External consultants and mentors add to the process of support in the areas of science, social studies and the arts. Teachers enjoy opportunities to observe others, share best practices and to visit other schools to see model classrooms. School leaders actively encourage collaborations and schedule regular team meetings to discuss school improvements, student work, lesson planning and behavior modification strategies. More teachers have become involved in inquiry team work this year so that the systems can be shared more widely.

Professional development, based on evidence from observations reflects whole school foci but also responds to individual need. There is however, no formal professional development plan in place at present which means that the work is not as focused as it could be with realistic timeframes for achievement. Teachers are pleased to be receiving a great deal of support but the impact of the programs on student learning is yet to be fully analyzed. New teachers receive specific and continuous support through mentors, workshops, outside consultants and conversations with the principal. This enables them to grow and develop their professional skills quickly in a supportive environment.

The guidance program has been restructured this year to better meet the needs of the students, to good effect. Student social and personal skills are carefully monitored and parents work closely with the school to ensure that their children receive the guidance and support that they require to achieve their personal goals. Behavior management remains a high priority, as faculty continues to improve student relationships both within the classroom and in shared areas like the hallways.

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.

The school's mission statement, now in place, reflects a recommendation from the prior Quality Review. The shared vision of defining learning and its processes now engages the whole school community in the improvement planning program. All stakeholders worked collaboratively on developing the school goals and mission and are eager to monitor progress and evaluate success. In addition, the school's self-evaluation mirrors the evidence of increased parental engagement, inquiry team expansion and the use of checkpoints and benchmarks to monitor student progress over time. This planning

supports the school in using various sources of information to increase the focus on learning to meet precise student and school needs. The school sees the connection in revising its programming schedule and budgetary considerations for next year to more closely align its resources to school needs. The school uses a horizontal chart for supervisory responsibilities that is grade based only. This means that vertical or subject based supervisors have reduced ownership and their skills and expertise is not being fully utilized.

The school uses its progress report, learning environment survey, Quality Review, unit tests, bulletin boards of student work, attendance and disciplinary data to evaluate its progress and to monitor and revise its outcomes and planning. The use of a wide variety of data by the school enables it to see the precise needs of its community and then to plan to address those needs. As an example of this, the school keeps a tracking log on student behaviors, infractions, levels, dates, outcomes, supports, timelines and remedies for each student violating the agreed upon conduct code. This kind of data use guides the school in knowing each child's social and emotional need and it supports the school in developing an individualized behavioral plan for each student.

The new administration has a clear vision for the future development of the school and is working hard to ensure that all the systems and structures are in place to make this work successfully.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: John Ericsson Middle 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, 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.

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>	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.							
<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	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.							
<i>To what extent do...</i>	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