

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

Jean Nuzzi School

Middle School 109

213-10 92 Avenue

Queens

NY 11428

Principal: Miatheresa Pate Alexander

Dates of review: March 25-26, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Lenon Murray

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Jean Nuzzi School is a middle school with 1470 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 49% Black, 20% Hispanic, 2% White, and 28% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 4% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007-2008 was 91.5%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The new principal and her staff have created a calm and positive learning environment for all students. The principal meets regularly with staff, both individually and in clusters, to elicit their ideas on improving instruction. This has facilitated a collaborative approach to curriculum planning. As principal, she maintains a strong focus on instructional leadership. This leads to solid improvement in student performance in all core subject areas. The school has utilized data effectively to promote progress in the areas of weakness highlighted by last year's Quality Review. The school has collaborated intensely with all constituencies in planning and implementing the Comprehensive Educational Plan. Priority developments address the most recent student achievement data and goals evolved during this process.

Instructional coaches are responsible for English language arts, math, social studies and science. They have supported the refinement of professional development available to teachers. The vast majority of teachers display a strong commitment to improve their instructional practices to meet the learning needs of their students. Recently introduced essential questions in lessons have led to clarification in the curriculum that has made monitoring differentiated instruction and assessment easier. Teachers work collaboratively in grade and subject teams to plan their curriculum and instruction. Many teachers have implemented effective ways of utilizing formative assessments to capture class and individual needs in a range of core subjects. There has been good progress in developing useful rubrics, making it easier for students to assess their own work. Interim checkpoints are evident in English language arts, math, social studies and science. They are less evident in other core subject areas. Many students can articulate their long-term goals in core subjects. Some students have difficulty in explaining their precise next steps.

Outreach to parents has led to a repair in the parent/school connection. The school is now more successful in enlisting the support of parents in meeting students' instructional goals. The parent association is functional and parent volunteers are in the school daily to support events and tutor students. The school has reached out to community-based organizations to support artistic and recreational activities. Tangible outcomes from these partnerships are developing more slowly than the school leaders expected. The main Inquiry Team has focused effectively on English Language Learners in the building. The school would like to expand the numbers of teachers engaged in inquiry but has not facilitated the establishment of multiple Inquiry Teams.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides effective leadership, communicating a clear and relentless vision to improve student achievement.
- The school has a rich, robust curriculum with a strong foundation in literacy and writing across all content areas to meet students' academic needs.
- The school uses collaborative and data-informed processes to develop and implement the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan.
- The administration has expanded professional development opportunities with significant input from faculty, enabling teachers to hone and improve their instructional skills.
- The school has re-engaged with the parent body and recognized parents as key partners in the education of their children, with increased opportunities for meaningful participation.
- The school administration regularly uses a wide range of data to evaluate the effectiveness of organizational decisions, interventions, professional development and deployment of staff.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase opportunities for partnerships with families and outside organizations to support artistic and recreational activities that accelerate the academic and personal growth of students.
- Expand the utilization of interim checkpoints that are monitored through the year in order to achieve maximum learning outcomes in all core subjects to meet the needs of students and groups of students.
- Establish additional opportunities for staff to set up multiple Inquiry Teams to share expertise and look at student work and data.
- Ensure that students are part of setting their own qualitative and quantitative goal setting and have a clear understanding of the next steps to improve their outcomes.

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.

The principal bases her academic and organizational decisions on the continuous use of data. The school has good data management systems and is seeking to deepen the wide range of information it analyzes. Teachers collect summative data from State assessments, formative data from periodic assessments and teacher-generated qualitative data. The school uses benchmark assessments early in the academic year to provide valuable information for teachers in the initial planning of instruction. There are common practices for evaluating student progress in English language arts, math, science and social studies. There are inconsistencies in evaluating other core subject areas.

The administration has solid systems in place to track student attendance and punctuality. They observed that many late students were marked absent on a daily basis. In response, the school altered procedures at entry and exit points in the building and adjustments made in methods for noting attendance and absences. Student attendance has improved this year.

School leaders are reflective in their approach. They emphasize a collaborative approach to gathering, logging, analysis and explication of data in most areas of their work. The school examines assessment tools and recording systems for their efficacy. Teachers' data includes reports from notebooks, conference notes, student projects, class work and homework. This enables the school to send updated information home, supplementing regular report cards.

The school analyzes the performance of the various subgroups of students well. Through analysis it was apparent that females significantly outperformed males in English language arts on all grade levels and in all ethnic groups. The administration and faculty increased the quality and quantity of writing required, first in literacy and then across all content areas. Teachers improved the assessment aspects of their conferencing with students and developed students' skills through accountable talk and discussion groups that included male students. English language arts teachers surveyed boys and selected literature that reflected their interests. Analysis also showed that students with individual education plans performed well below their peers. The school's response was to increase pull-out and push-in small group sessions taught by special education and academic intervention teachers. English language learners have become the primary focus of the school Inquiry Team, as data revealed their difficulties with essential academic vocabulary.

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 administration has been inclusive in engaging the various school constituencies in the development of whole school goals. This has resulted in parents, students and staff providing information and input in the writing of the school’s Comprehensive Education Plan. There are regular meetings of the school leadership team where data drives the conversation about the continuous improvement of student achievement. The school’s progress in establishing benchmarks has enabled teachers to define the curriculum through essential questions to establish what students will know and be able to do at the conclusion of an effective lesson. These questions facilitate an inquiry-based approach to lesson planning and delivery of instruction that holds teachers accountable for accomplishing their goals in each lesson. Students are included in the development of their long-term goals and they speak confidently of what they intend to accomplish this year. Teachers create clearly written goals for students that are well integrated with pacing calendars. They assess achievement within these goals at the end of each marking period. While teachers explicitly “SMART” goals in lesson essential questions, reinforcing these through direct instruction, students are less familiar with their interim goals and have considerably less input in devising the next steps in their learning.

Parents are required to sign the progress reports sent home in addition to the regular report cards. This procedure provides a verification system for maintaining home/school communication. Parents are encouraged to send their questions and their comments to the teachers. As one parent said, “The teachers are accessible and share our kids’ progress with us.” The school’s administration communicates high expectations in tangible ways. Teachers maintain high standards in their classrooms and are available at designated periods for students who need extra instructional assistance. The school’s Inquiry Team is active, meets regularly and is spreading the process of inquiry among teachers schoolwide. Teachers have increased their understanding of what the process of inquiry entails. Only one formal Inquiry Team exists in the building at this time. The target population this school year consists of English language learners in grade 7 who are struggling in math. This focus has enabled math teachers to hone in on the vocabulary deficits of these students and provide direct instruction. These effective methods are spreading to all English language learners. Teachers are assisting their struggling students in other subgroups through analysis of periodic data, conference notes, classroom assignments and homework. Intervention is targeted and differentiated.

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 curriculum is relevant and rooted in a strong literacy foundation. The school a non-Title 1 school and has operated under budgetary constraints. The principal has made strategic budget choices that have channeled resources to essential services and staffing. She is committed to improving access to technology and providing adequate curriculum materials. Teachers make good use of the resources available to them and spend time with students in small groups to reinforce the impact of their teaching.

Technological resources are gradually growing throughout the school. This improves capacity throughout each department as technology gradually increases. Students have been taught to care for their equipment and their books to extend their durability.

An inquiry-based approach is used to focus differentiated instruction in the classrooms. Assessment systems of varying quality are in place for all students. Teachers make effective use of their conference notes and summative data to group students flexibly for instruction. Differentiation of instruction flows from informal and formal assessment of students while checking for lesson understanding. Not all teachers are equally adept with the shift from whole class teacher-dominated instruction. The principal has consistently modeled instruction and accepted feedback from teachers to refine differentiated instruction. Some higher achieving students feel insufficiently challenged however. The school has a firm commitment to meeting the needs of students with special education needs. Good systems are in place to support them with the same quality instruction and assessment.

Specialist teachers deliver pre-engineering and pre-nursing programs to the school's higher achieving students. A variety of media is used to teach these courses. All teachers keep a helpful range of information on students' achievement in each unit of work. These systems are better developed in English language arts, math, social studies and science than in art or physical education. Students enjoy sharing their work. They are generally aware of their strengths and weaknesses. The school community would like to see an expansion of opportunities for students in the arts and in technology. Currently opportunities are limited due to budgetary constraints.

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.

Administration consistently engages in formal and informal observations of teachers. This results in productive professional conversations in which teachers play a very active role. Teachers have substantial input on their personal and professional goals. These goals are based on the continuous improvement of instruction. The principal has expanded the role of coaches to include all the major content areas and these coaches are responsive to teacher requests and preferences. She has also based her definition of effective teaching on the robust professional Santa Cruz teaching standards from California, energizing the discourse.

The schedule includes common planning time that allows teachers in each content area to meet regularly. This facilitates collaborative inquiry and the sharing of research-based best practices. Inter-visitation is encouraged and founded upon a close analysis of student work. The principal supports teachers directly in a coaching capacity by modeling lessons herself and being open to teacher feedback. This approach makes it easier for teachers to discuss their areas in need of improvement without defensiveness.

The Inquiry Team plays a key role in the professional development of staff with regard to the development of targeted intervention skills. Teachers across subject areas and grades now focus on their struggling students following examples of the techniques used by the Inquiry Team for English language learners. Leaders are considering expanding this work into additional Inquiry Teams. Guidance counselors work with students in planning their major goals at least a year before graduation. The administration has continued reaching out to community organizations in an attempt to increase choices for

families. This has not yet produced tangible results. There has been a reduction in after-school activities and extra-curricular programs in the school because of budget reductions. The parents have attempted to help by increasing their volunteer and tutoring activities. One parent remarked, "Enrichment and after-school activities are important and we don't have enough of either."

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 has a clear and systematic process to evaluate its action plans and revise them as needed. It utilizes all forms of available data to refine its goal-setting processes. The school community periodically examines key documents such as the Comprehensive Education Plan, past Quality Reviews, the outcomes of the learning environment survey and key formative and summative data to ensure that it is reaching its goals for student achievement. Teachers' goals, student goals and whole-school goals are set and reviewed within clear timeframes. .

Teachers regularly assess students in relation to their goals. They use clearly defined rubrics to determine if students are meeting expectations and introduce intervention and support in a timely manner when needed. The parents, teachers and school administration use the outcome of each review to make appropriate adjustments to the curriculum, students groupings and academic interventions for individual students.. Students need to be further included in short-term interim goals and specific next steps. Students were unclear about what came next in their lessons even though they knew what they wanted to achieve from the entire semester. Teachers use unit assessments in math, student work and periodic assessments in social studies, science and English language arts to monitor actual progress. Though this is not yet consistent across all core subjects, the school demonstrates good ability to adapt its practices in response to the data.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Jean Nuzzi 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 ...	△	➤	✓	+
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...	△	➤	✓	+
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 ...	△	➤	✓	+
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