

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

**Juniper Valley School
Elementary School 128**

**69-26 65 Drive
Queens, NY 11379**

Principal: John Lavelle

Dates of review: December 3-4, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Sumita Kaufhold

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Juniper Valley School is an elementary school with 436 students from kindergarten through grade five. The school population comprises 1% Black, 16.7% Hispanic, 77% White, and 5.1% Asian students. The student body includes 2.8% English language learners and 10.6% special education students. Boys account for 50.9% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49.1%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007-2008 was 94.8%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Juniper Valley School currently has two sites within a block of each other. The principal has been in the school for 22 years and is the sole administrator of both sites. One site is for kindergarten through grade 2 and the other site is an annex with grades 3 through 5. In the annex, the school has created a very positive learning environment out of what was once a warehouse building. Due to the shortage of space, however, the school has four double classes; one in kindergarten and grade 2 and two in grade 3. These classes are team-taught. The special education class is a bridge class for grade 3 and 4 students. The school will become a kindergarten through grade 8 school housed in one newly constructed building in September 2009.

Overall Evaluation

This school is underdeveloped with proficient features.

Juniper valley school provides a broad and interesting curriculum for its students, comprising of a range of core programs and specialist teaching in science. Despite difficulties with space and the lack of an auditorium and a gym, students enjoy varied activities through enrichment opportunities. The school has worked hard to make the most of its inadequate accommodation, creating a bright and attractive environment for learning. The principal organizes his leadership and management of the split-site well and has a clear overview of the strengths and areas for improvement at the school.

Levels of mutual respect are high and students and teachers share good relationships, effectively supporting students' personal and social development. Elements of good practice are apparent in the school's use of data, differentiation of instruction and goal setting for individual students in English language arts and math. However, practice is not consistent in all core subjects. Moreover, the school has not clearly established precise action steps to achieve its priority goals where development and improvement is needed. While professional development has been successful in building professional capacity for individual teachers, the monitoring and evaluation of professional development as a whole is not sufficiently formalized to support improved student progress school wide. From recent data, the school has identified student groups who are not making sufficient progress. Before this recent analysis, however, the school did not focus on pertinent data to identify why students do not make sufficient yearly progress. For this reason, too many students, including those in the school's lowest achieving third, failed to make adequate yearly progress last year.

Parents are involved in the work of the school and have good understanding of their child's performance. They are supportive of the teachers, principal and school staff. In addition, they offer good help to their children at home, so students come to school prepared and motivated to learn.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- A good range of data is shared with parents, helping them to understand their children's performance, particularly in English language arts and math.
- The school climate is good and characterized by positive relationships and high levels of trust between adults and students.
- Although responsible for two sites, the principal has a good understanding of strengths and areas requiring improvement across the whole school.
- Professional development is well focused on individual teachers needs and has been successful in improving practice.
- Despite restrictions imposed by limited space, the school nonetheless, provides a broad and enriched curriculum.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend the effective practice that has begun in reading and math in setting measurable end of year goals in all core subjects and communicating them to parents and students.
- Establish interim markers of student learning that identify their progress toward end of year goals.
- Ensure the comparative performance of all sub-groups is used in planning actions to accelerate their progress.
- Clearly communicate to students the precise learning steps so that they know exactly what they have to learn next and why.
- Continue to develop teacher skills in analyzing and using data to plan lessons that consistently challenge all students.

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 has initiated school-wide practice to collect data in English language arts, math science and social studies. Teachers collect a good range of formative data, including running records, conference notes, English and math checklists and classroom tests. Leaders and teachers primarily analyze English language arts and math summative and formative data in grades 3 to 5, and the practice is rippling out steadily to include social studies and science. However, early grades teachers do not analyze collected data precisely enough to inform instruction and so meet the needs of all learners. The summative data shows there are students in grades 4 and 5, who previously met grade levels standards, who are not performing at the same level in the current year.

The administration is increasing its close analysis of sub-group data, for example, with regard to the achievement of boys and girls and English language learners. In addition, leaders have begun the use of longitudinal data comparisons between grades and subgroups. As a result, there is a growing momentum to ensure all students make adequate progress. The school has begun the practice of setting student goals in English language arts, and communicated these goals to parents in November. Leaders plan to share students' math goals with parents in February. However, students do not yet understand their precise learning steps, so that they know exactly what they have to learn next and why.

The data specialist reviews Acuity data and provides teachers with student outcomes. This assists teachers in their English language arts grouping. Although some teachers are comfortable analyzing their own data, this is not consistent school-wide. In addition, aside from English language arts and math, leaders and teachers do not analyze assessments in other core subjects optimally in order to identify trends to inform instructional and organizational decisions in a consistent, systematic manner.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

Leaders set goals in English language arts and mathematics based on last year's summative results. This practice has not yet been fully extended to other core subjects, although goals are set in some subjects by individual teachers. The inconsistency in practice means that teachers do not always build on upon what students already know, nor do they plan a set of action steps to achieve identified goals within a designated timeframe. Leaders and teachers check interim benchmarks twice a year in order to target instruction in English language arts and math. However, they do not do this in

other core other subjects to establish, monitor and meet end of year goals. This means that instruction is not effectively differentiated to meet the needs of individuals and groups of students.

Through the school leadership team, some parents and teachers are involved at several stages in school improvement planning. Parents in the school leadership team are aware of the Comprehensive Educational Plan goals. While many teachers know school priorities for this year, and goals are posted around the building, not all are fully knowledgeable about how these goals were derived, or the rationale behind them. In response to data analysis, this year's priority goals are focused around progress in math and English language arts in grades 4 and 5. Actions include the use of math language and improved differentiation. Additional goals relate to the inclusion of all students in arts education, via dance, music or visual arts programs.

Leaders and faculty members meet at least twice a year to discuss, review and adjust timeframes for student goals in English language arts and math. These meetings do not include goal setting or tracking of progress in any other core subject as yet. Parents and students have so far received information on goals in English language arts and the dissemination of math goals is planned for February 2009. Currently, there is limited use and communication of goal setting in other subjects, and little attention to establishing what supports are needed, within set timeframes, for students to meet these goals, improving overall achievement.

The principal communicates suitable expectations about academic performance, attendance and behavior to students and families. To address behavior issues for some students, the principal collaborated to good effect with District 75 and implemented the Strategies, Techniques and Options Prior to Placement (STOPP) program. The parent coordinator actively involves parents through outreach, providing parent workshops and addressing the needs of parents. This results in significant parental attendance at workshops and meetings addressing student performance.

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.

Space is restricted in this school and there is no gym, auditorium or school library. Creatively, the school uses the multi-purpose room in the annex to hold its enrichment program. The administration surveys students and staff to understand their interests. The results of this questionnaire inform the school enrichment model clusters. There is an after school dance club for girls only, in grades 4 and 5. There is a dance program from kindergarten to grade 3 and also a visual arts program from kindergarten to grade 5. The school has student dance performances, art shows, plays and science and literacy fairs. These opportunities provide an interesting range of activities for students that run successful alongside suitable programs for core subjects.

Teachers use assessments for English language arts and math to inform and differentiate lessons. This practice has not yet extended to other core subjects. Where data is available, they use it successfully to group students and match tasks to learning needs. However, because teachers' skills, knowledge and application are at varying stages of development, lessons do not always meet the full range of student needs, particularly for subgroups such as English language learners. Teacher skills are not yet

fully developed in analyzing and using data to plan and extend lessons that consistently challenge all students.

The principal strategically supports learning through use of a retired teacher to work with and mentor three new teachers. An additional teacher in English language arts supports teachers in grades 1-3, providing small group instruction and in-class modeling. Grades 4 and 5 have common grade planning time supported by a consultant in accelerated literacy learning, to strengthen English language arts instruction. Additional books for the classroom libraries enable student choice and effectively build interest in independent reading. The school recognizes the value of providing additional books and resources in the native language for the classroom libraries to support literacy skills for English language learners. However, these developments are not effectively monitored, nor outcomes measured objectively to make sure that effort and spending result in improved student outcomes, particularly for target groups.

The school's respectful climate shows in the mutual trust between adults and students. The parents have high regard for the principal and teachers in the school. They feel welcome in the school, appreciate the school's programs and are encouraged to participate in supporting the achievement of their children. The Learning Leaders program suitably prepares parent volunteers to assist in classrooms.

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.

Each teacher sets their own personal goals in relation to the school-wide goals, with written feedback from the principal. However, they do not set benchmarks for progress towards these goals. In addition, there are insufficient goals based on the principal's observations and subsequent evaluation of teachers, scrutiny of student work, or student performance. Teachers feel supported by the principal when allowed to attend external professional development based on their interest and choice. Measures are not yet in place to establish the impact of this professional development on classroom instruction and student achievement school-wide. While faculty meets monthly and grades 4 and 5 have common planning meetings, early grades teachers meet in their own time to plan, because here is no formal time to collaborate and plan together in order to improve student outcomes.

The Inquiry Team is rightly focusing on the improvement of grade 4 and 5 students' reading comprehension, inference, drawing conclusions and character analysis. Inviting a different grade to their weekly meetings involves the wider staff in their research. Although they share assessment results, they have not examined student work for the target population in depth, in order to measure and plan for improvement in individual student learning. Following last year's Quality Review, teachers have begun inter-visitations to classrooms a grade above or below the grade they currently teach in. Processes have begun to share good practice and replicate successful strategies. The principal, although managing two sites, has a good understanding of the strengths and areas requiring improvement across the school. The principal targets certain teachers' professional development needs and has had some success in improving their practice.

Fruitful partnerships with the police and fire departments successfully support students' academic and personal growth. The "Project Friends Program" has positive impact on students regarding issues of bullying and cooperation with peers. The school's

investment in a full time guidance counselor benefits student and families, through crisis intervention work, and provides support for classroom teachers and students in addressing behavior issues that interfere with learning.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

The school has interim goals for some school plans and instructional practices, and evaluates for success at least twice per year. The school has initiated the comparative performance analysis of its subgroups. However, the school has not yet developed action plans to accelerate those students' outcomes across the school. Teachers of English language arts and math can demonstrate how they assess and set goals in order to accelerate student learning. In these two subjects, there are interim checkpoints for students particularly in grades 3 to 5. However, the school has not fully established interim success markers for ongoing student learning that identify progress toward end of year goals across all core subjects.

Based on the data, some teachers reorganize their student groupings for instruction. The principal reviews the progress report, Quality Review, learning environment survey, formative and interim assessments, and attendance data, findings to evaluate the effectiveness of organizational decisions. The principal uses formal and informal observations to evaluate the performance of the teachers.

The Comprehensive Educational Plan aligns addresses the needs of the school in order to improve students' outcomes. The school's self-evaluation is descriptive and outlines the key features in place for this academic year, but lacks sufficient evaluation of current quality. The school has a clear vision for its future development, which is understood by its teachers and members of the school community.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Juniper Valley 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, DY0, 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