

Quality Review

Report

2008-2009

The John Philip Sousa School

Junior High School 142

3750 Baychester Avenue
Bronx
NY 10466

Principal: Casimiro Cibelli

Dates of review: April 6 - 7, 2009
Lead Reviewer: Ronald Marc Feinstein

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

John Philip Sousa is a junior high school with 1,067 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 72% Black, 25% Hispanic, 0% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 91.3%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 73% eligibility.

The school is organized into four themed academies: Business Law and Social Justice, Sports and Leadership, Media and Creative Arts, and Health, Recreation and Environmental Studies. Each academy is directed by an assistant principal and supported by a dean and guidance counselor.

Overall Evaluation

This school is underdeveloped with proficient features.

John Philip Sousa's four academies believe in the mission to "Teach Every Child as You Would Your Own". The principal's leadership and management are decisive in how the school is currently progressing. In a relatively short time, he has reinvested the school with the value of believing in young people and themselves as professionals, and the importance of nurturing staff and student opportunities to grow. Parents, teachers and students expressed high expectations and this is increasing the level of parent participation. Significantly improved attendance rates are a clear indication that students and their families are valuing education more. The school has worked hard to dispel past perceptions and John Philip Sousa is a safer and more secure place where learning is improving.

The school has a foundational understanding of the part data plays in the setting of broad goals to drive instruction. While this is strongest in English language arts and math, the school does not have that same degree of analysis in the other core subjects, especially social studies and science. The Inquiry Team is helping teachers with this area of their work. The school has yet to look at appropriate ways of challenging the more able students in the school. A number of external organizations support the school and this is helping the school greatly as they strive to improve student learning especially for struggling students. The school has yet to develop systems of action planning with clear and uniform monitoring structures for staff to develop their individual work aligned to the school's overall goals. Not surprisingly, student goal setting in all core subjects is at a very early stage. The principal acknowledges the importance of developing closer monitoring strategies as the school continues to challenge itself and improve the learning opportunities for all its students.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Through regular use of a wide range of relevant data, leaders and faculty have an on-going understanding of individual, subject and academy performance, which informs instructional and organizational adjustment.
- The staff, students and parents share and demonstrate high expectations for improving student achievement.
- Relationships among students, families, teachers and school leaders are warm and respectful, resulting in an environment that is conducive to learning.
- The school has developed several positive and effective partnerships to support students and their families in continual learning and promote students' personal growth and development.
- This school is supportive of students, staff and family, and has a sound understanding of its strengths, areas for continued development and a clear vision for its future growth.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend data gathering and analysis practices to all core subjects to provide a complete picture of students' progress across all aspects of the school with an emphasis on learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups.
- Develop the current emerging process of goal setting by requiring all teachers to negotiate with their students' individual learning goals that define next steps in achieving long-term goals and involve students more actively in self-assessment.
- Promote greater consistency in differentiated instruction based on data, so that lesson planning reflects purposeful groupings, students are challenged, tasks and task level address different learning styles and questions extend thinking to maximize student learning.
- Use evidence from observations to develop with teachers goals and plans for their professional growth to enhance student achievement and which reflect and support attainment of school-wide goals.
- Include measurable outcomes and interim checkpoints in all goals across the school to monitor progress and achievement.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

Data collection and analysis at John Philip Sousa begins at the summative level for English language arts and mathematics. State results for science and social studies also are harvested, but since those students have already left the school, the results primarily serve to adjust the taught curriculum. Utilization of the State gains report as well as Acuity periodic assessments uncover positive and negative progress trends and assist leadership to set broad, grade-level goals. Data collection for sixth graders is less comprehensive and to date relies strictly on State summative data. The principal understands this challenge; a review of current seventh graders' achievement highlighted a noticeable gap. The school intends to institute a mandatory sixth grade summer program to enable staff to assess first hand incoming fall 2009 students.

Analyzing the performance and progress of different sub-groups is not yet systemic. Many teachers struggle to determine the effectiveness of strategic intervention as well as identifying a cohesive approach to goal setting. Progress Report data called for redoubled efforts and focus on the growing special education population. A new Rigby assessment was implemented to assure that these students are properly placed and a data portfolio of formative assessments provides teachers with as much information as possible. The data portfolio is designed to assist teachers as they work with coaches and administrators to better assess and address the specific needs and progress of students and to provide differentiated instruction. The work in this area has begun, and the principal acknowledges that much more needs to be accomplished. Work with a cohort of English language learners is developing; the school provides targeted support through the Apagea smart help program. This web-based application promotes differentiated mathematics instruction through a skills-based, problem-solving process. Parents welcome the open communication with teachers, principal and academy leaders. They remarked very favorably on the "parent messenger" system and the prompt response to absence and lateness. Parents and students celebrated this year's increased attendance rate.

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.

Parents and students express a common vision for the school and staff increasingly embrace this same vision. Interestingly, students interviewed noted that each academy had slightly different criteria for behavior and agreed that more common expectations would enhance camaraderie. Parents receive a Progress Report at end of each marking period and students complete a learning portfolio in the fall that records their subject

grade for the previous year and their goals for the current year. This is an encouraging start to familiarizing all stake-holders with the goal-setting process. Learning goals are primarily established through summative data. This process is under well-deserved review to enable the school to create higher levels of challenge, to accelerate struggling students as well as the high achievers. The summer institute for incoming sixth graders mentioned earlier is a worthy strategy used for goal setting in this year's Comprehensive Educational Plan. The Vacamos program was also created to respond to the socio-emotional needs of high level at-risk students. Students identified for Vacamos attend several week-long camp experiences jam-packed with activities to build team building collaboration skills as well as self esteem. Aligned to the State assessment schedule, the Vacamos experience includes smart test preparation and targeted support in math and literacy. One parent told us that Vacamos literally saved her struggling sixth grader from dropping out of school. This student is now a high achiever and an award winning junior high school athlete.

Further work by the principal and staff is needed to establish and extend the emerging state of setting short-term goals along with timeframes from a few isolated pockets of teacher practice to a school-wide effort. Teachers and students are not clear about how to define their own next steps that serve as a vehicle to involve them more actively in purposeful self-assessment. The TIC/TOC (teacher in charge/teacher on call) is a noteworthy innovation. This involves a daily cabinet meeting at which principal, assistant principals, guidance counselors and academic intervention specialists target students at risk across the four academies. Students, teachers and their families are enthusiastic about the intervention program designed collaboratively by the TIC and implemented by an assigned TOC.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

When this principal began his tenure 16 months ago the school was marked by a significant number of suspensions. That dire situation is nearly reversed and positively noted by parents, students and staff alike. The entire school community was involved through "Public Colors" in designing a palette of color to coordinate with the four themed academies. Students their families and staff then painted the building. A successful basketball team rallies the student body and a school store in partnership with Elizabeth Arden sells cosmetics and healthy snacks. This partnership also supported a permanent installation in the school's atrium honoring woman leaders and was authored by female students at John Philip Sousa. A science fair was held for the first time in 15 years; and the principal has secured funding for a multi-million dollar science laboratory. Students record their music in a school studio that has been visited by Britney Spears. The student government maintains a desk in the central office right outside the principal's door! These are not small steps; they all factor into a formula that raises the tone of the school resulting in an environment more than ever conducive to student learning. Many of the students interviewed participate as leaders in the student government. There was consensus in discussing their work and aspirations that they invite more rigor in academic work. The school has yet to look at appropriate ways of challenging these more able students in the school. The shift to differentiation of instruction requires a paradigm shift in teaching; a change that is understood by the principal and supported through professional development.

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 and academy leaders have sought out several effective partnerships to create a wide range of opportunities for students to grow academically and socially. Community based organizations provide specific support to each academy. Media and Arts funds a music ensemble. Health, Recreation and Environmental Studies negotiated a multi-million dollar science laboratory and supports excursions to the bordering nature preserve. Business and Law partners with Elizabeth Arden, Inc. to establish a stand-alone school store modeling best business practices. Sports and Leadership promotes winning basketball teams for both boys and girls as well as a Cheer Squad. An additional number of community based organizations focus on students' academics: the Leadership Institute, Beacon, Baychester, Princeton Review and Vacamos all work in concert with the school's mission. The principal conducts observations, learning walks and informal observations to best understand the professional development needs of teachers, but the resulting data collection from these activities does not provide evidence of explicit strategies that will lead to improving teacher instruction.

The school is at the very early stages of implementing differentiated strategies to improve each teacher's instruction. Lesson planning and implementation does not yet reflect purposeful groupings, nor do tasks accommodate different learning styles. There is scant evidence of differentiated tasks and levels of difficulty in classroom observations. Teachers provide few opportunities for students to synthesize and analyze through higher levels of questioning. Teachers meet by content area for regularly scheduled common planning time, but there is little evidence that current professional development is designed to encourage teachers to evaluate and revise their practice. A goal has been set for next year to better align lesson planning to the Learning Standards and Performance Standards. The principal emphasizes and encourages inter-class and inter-academy, but this remains an informal practice making impact difficult to measure. The work of the Inquiry Team, which consists of teachers, coaches, administrators and both English language learners and special education specialists, is highly organized. The team is targeting 21 English language learners who struggle with the writing component of summative assessments and bases its work on data harvested from Acuity predictive formative assessments. The team has developed a graphic organizer for these students and continues to work on students' writing organization, mechanics and use of language. The team conducts open meetings and welcomes any interested school staff to attend the weekly meetings.

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 principal and senior colleagues collect summative data and analyze periodic data on a regular basis to gauge the progress of students. This process does not extend to all core subject areas. The school has begun to share the thinking for a school-wide action plan, but to date the monitoring of progress in achieving these goals is in early stages of development. The school is not yet systemic or departmental in the strategic use of

interim goals for monitoring progress towards reaching agreed upon long-term goals. The development of individual goal setting for students and teachers is at a preliminary stage of development and the entire school community is beginning to re-conceptualize how they think about teaching and learning. The principal understands how progress monitoring will assist in establishing interim goals and move this school forward. He articulates a clear and strong vision for John Philip Sousa that is shared by most staff and teachers, parents and students. John Philip Sousa's four academies believe in the mission to "Teach Every Child as You Would Your Own". The school now challenges itself, its students and the community. The principal assesses the school's strengths accurately as the school journeys on the next phase of its development.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: The John Philip Sousa 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, 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