

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2008-2009**

**Jill Chaifetz Transfer High School**

**High School 379**

**778 Forest Avenue**

**Bronx**

**NY 10456**

**Principal: Anne Fennelly**

**Dates of review: April 6-7, 2009**

**Lead Reviewer: Charlene Jordan**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Jill Chaifetz Transfer School is a high school with 125 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 47% Black, 51% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 0% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 69.5 %. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 60% eligibility.

This new school is in its second year and accepts students between the ages of 16-20 who have completed ninth grade, as a minimum. The school shares space with two middle schools and a district 75 program.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is underdeveloped with proficient features.**

The school offers a beacon of hope for overage, under credited young people who come to the school seeking an opportunity to fulfill their graduation requirements in a personalized, supportive environment. The staff, under the leadership of a dynamic and caring principal, understands that they are responsible not just for teaching a standards based curriculum but also for providing encouragement and opportunities for students to obtain credits and skills through engaging classes and academic support. The school's partnership with Citizen's Advice Bureau is paramount through which it aims to meet the social and emotional needs of students. The added support of: the *learning to work* program, emphasizing real life skills and post secondary planning, complements the academic program. All members of the school community cite the culture of mutual trust and respect as a strength of the school.

The school analyzes a range of data to track the progress of individual students and to determine specific academic and emotional interventions to encourage student engagement and achievement. The school places an emphasis is on instruction and student engagement and currently, this data is not yet used to establish and articulate explicit learning goals to students and their families, including next steps and specific timeframes involved. Additionally, the school does not presently analyze data for subgroups or monitor individual progress over time.

The collaborative staff engages in ongoing professional development focused on improving literacy across content areas and increasing student engagement through the use of a rubric based on "Bloom's Taxonomy". The principal and instructional coaches provide ongoing support to improve staff proficiency towards fulfilling the school-wide goals. The school does not set individualized professional goals for staff with the necessary detailed plans to help improve each teacher's instruction connected to specific student achievement outcomes. Additionally, clear time frames with short-term benchmarks have yet to be established for its targets and this reduces the school's capacity to make revisions, if needed, from which to accomplish its long-term goals.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal is respected for establishing a caring, supportive community focused on student and adult learning.
- The school's partnership with Citizen's Advice Bureau provides an effective emphasis on the social and emotional needs of students that support positive connections to adults linked to academic success and real life experiences.
- A culture of mutual trust and respect permeates the school resulting in positive attitudes that support academic and personal growth of students and collegiality among staff.
- The school provides numerous opportunities for teachers to learn together and work collaboratively to improve their instructional practice.
- The curriculum offers a wide range of experiences and choices during and after school designed to increase student engagement while affording numerous opportunities for credit accumulation and fulfillment of graduation requirements.

### What the school needs to improve

- Expand staff expertise in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data to monitor and address effectively, individual and groups of students' progress over time, including patterns and trends in all subgroups.
- Formalize the process of establishing explicit learning goals for all students so that they and their parents, as well as staff, understand next steps and timeframes involved.
- Develop the teacher portfolio and smart goals process to provide focused support to improve each teacher's instruction connected to specific student achievement outcomes.
- Implement an action plan to clearly articulate and realize the school's vision for future development, including post-secondary readiness for students.
- Utilize strategic decision-making to evaluate progress towards defined goals for student achievement and teacher effectiveness through routine checks in order to make appropriate adjustments in programs and professional development.

## **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.**

In order to maximize opportunities for students to accumulate credits and prepare for Regents exams, the school has implemented 12-week semesters and a data system that provides ongoing information about academic performance. Using bi-weekly assessments, teachers provide ongoing information about the progress of individual students in all subject classes. Advisors share the detailed information from the reports with students, who are then able to select assignments and seek additional support from teachers. Students indicate that this system is effective in helping them remain current in their classes. Parents, too, receive positive information about student progress through phone calls and notes home. The principal and her administrative team carefully analyze this academic data, as well as attendance patterns, to create a picture of students' areas of need and to inform organizational and instructional decisions. Positively, after reviewing Regents pass rates and credit accumulation patterns for the last two years, the principal has determined that developing a two-year loop of standards-based curricular options is essential for ensuring optimal opportunities for students to fulfill graduation requirements in a timely manner. This program is not yet in place.

While the school's data system has the potential to help teachers track student progress across subjects, there is no formalized process in place for this to occur. The principal recognizes this as a need and indicates that, "Data is in the hands of staff but it's about collecting the right data. Right now, the emphasis is on 'pedagogy' and student engagement". Similarly, the school does not use the data tracking system to compare student progress over time and to help families and students understand areas of strength and need. The exception to this is the analysis of attendance data, used to develop incentives and to establish short-term goals and appropriate academic and behavioral interventions. The school tends to focus on the progress of individual students and does not yet analyze data for genders or ethnicities in order to determine specific learning outcomes, needs, and patterns of particular groups of students from which to improve planning.

**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.**

The principal and staff work collaboratively to establish the annual goals for the development of the Comprehensive Educational Plan. The focus on improving attendance and increasing Regents pass rates results from a review of achievement data from the school's first year. An analysis of information from student intake records indicates that the majority of students enter the school with a reading level below sixth grade. This has led the principal to establish the goal of providing professional development time and resources to support teachers with integrating literacy strategies

into content areas as one of the priorities for this year. While lesson planning remains largely focused on full group instruction, the emphasis on building literacy skills drives much of the individual support students receive in English language arts, as well as social studies and science. This is less evident in math classes so the principal recently has hired a coach to assist teachers with planning and the development of differentiated learning goals for students. The literacy work in all content areas is still in the early stages and presently, there are no specific or measurable goals established to measure the progress of this aspect.

Students, teachers, and advisors work together in support of the principal's vision of creating a school where caring and self-actualization drive the work. Parents and students meet with school personnel and advisors from the school's partner, Citizen's Advice Bureau, to assess family support for the goals of the school prior to student acceptance. Advisors regularly reach out to families to apprise them of progress. However, while students cite general targets of passing courses and graduating, there are no mechanisms in place for involving students in establishing their own specific learning goals and the school does not use data analysis or establish interim benchmarks to assess students' progress. The result is that staff, students, and parents do not fully understand the next steps for learning and the timeframes involved.

**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.**

A culture of mutual trust and respect permeates the school environment. Staff and students credit the principal with encouraging the positive relationships between staff and students that support the academic and personal growth of the young people, as well as collegiality and collaboration among the adults. The school's programming supports an instructional approach that enables students to accumulate credits expeditiously, and this provides encouragement for the overage and under credited students. Twelve-week trimesters, multi-disciplinary courses, and tutoring and credit recovery programs present students with numerous opportunities to reach their overall goal of obtaining a high school diploma.

Presently, whole group instruction drives the planning of most lessons. Differentiation for individual learning styles and capabilities is in the early stages and not focused on meeting the needs of each student in response to their specific learning goals. In this current year, teachers have begun using "Bloom's Taxonomy" to plan lessons and develop a rubric to support the development of critical thinking and meta-cognitive skills. Ongoing conversations in teacher meetings and discussions with students about inter-disciplinary connections and future planning and goal setting indicate promising increases in the development of higher-order thinking skills. This is particularly evident in English language arts and projects classes, but there is no consistency in the use of the rubric in all classes and across all subject areas.

Coaching support provides teachers with templates for developing a curriculum that is rigorous and aligned to state standards. Conversations during teacher meeting times emphasize the need for scaffolding skills work and developing student-centered classrooms to increase student engagement.

The principal feels strongly that if classes are interesting as well as instructionally sound, student attendance should increase, and she points to the slight gain in attendance this year as evidence of the potential for this work. While this improvement in attendance, as well as an increase in passing rates for some courses, provides evidence that the emphasis on teacher planning for learning is positively impacting on instruction, the principal acknowledges that rigor and consistency is necessary to accelerate learning for students on all levels.

**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 underdeveloped with proficient features.**

An analysis of data from intake assessments, writing assignments in content classes, and Regents' results indicate that the majority of students struggle with comprehension and writing across disciplines. In order to address these deficits, as well as to increase attendance through engaging lessons, the principal has introduced teacher portfolios and smart goals this year. Teachers participate in regular and frequent professional development sessions and these meetings focus on supporting growth towards the school's goals of engaging learners through effective lesson planning and the integration of literacy learning strategies across subjects. Instructional coaches support the goals set by the principal through their work with teachers. Teachers indicate they appreciate the many opportunities for adult learning and collaboration. They and the principal report, that planning lessons with a focus on questioning and project-based learning is improving students' thinking skills, particularly in English language arts and projects classes. Presently, there has been no formal assessment developed or administered to assess this progress. Additionally, the school does not yet set individual professional goals with measurable interim checkpoints to monitor progress and evaluate the impact on student achievement.

The inquiry team's work also stems from analyses of the data and the conversations with teachers that indicate the challenges of teaching students who struggle with reading and writing. Through the use of low inference observations and reviews of student work, the team shared its findings on the need to improve questioning techniques and other literacy strategies, as well as using differentiation of instruction. Teachers are already beginning to emphasize literacy and higher level questioning in their classrooms and it is intended that information gained from this activity will guide the professional work of next year in order to maintain consistency. There are plans this spring for the staff to collaborate on selecting a protocol to use at teacher meetings to review student work.

Youth development is very well supported by both the school-based and outside partnerships and impacts positively on students' social, emotional, and academic development. Citizen's Advice Bureau provides advisories and connections to the home that are valued by students and their families, as well as by teachers, who see this collaboration as essential for keeping students on track. The partnerships with Youth Development Institute and the Office of Multiple Pathways presents opportunities for students to participate in paid internships and obtain real life work experience. A college advisor has recently joined the staff and is working to improve the career and planning for college process. The effective collaboration of all constituencies is evident in the respectful and supportive environment of the school.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

**This area of the school's work is underdeveloped with proficient features.**

The principal uses data from bi-weekly assessments, Regents' exams, and attendance reports to monitor student achievement and make appropriate adjustments in academic programs. When a review of passing rates for first period indicated high failure rates, the principal made some changes in the schedule and found that student attendance improved in the projects classes, primarily because students receive individualized support in a student-centered environment. Data is used in considering a new reading assessment tool to provide information that the principal believes will help teachers understand the need for more differentiation. Similar changes to the structure for professional development being made, as evidenced by the focus on planning engaging lessons to improve attendance and integrating literacy across disciplines to address lack of comprehension issues. However, while the work of the inquiry team is helping to inform some of these decisions, the staff is not currently involved in whole school planning to monitor progress and set measurable goals to evaluate student learning.

This year teachers began meeting in small groups, mixing content areas and levels of experience, in order to have conversations about how they are using assessments to determine if the objectives for learning are being met. This work is in the very early stages but the idea is to begin focusing on analyzing data in different subject areas to determine how planning for differentiated lessons is improving instruction. However, at present, the school does not have a formal structure that enables the principal and faculty to monitor and revise curriculum and professional development in a timely manner, with measurable benchmarks, in order to know of the level of impact this makes on student achievement.

Staff and students understand that the vision of the school is to provide a caring and stable community that supports the educational, social, and emotional well being of young people. The principal describes her goal for the school as being one where adults and students have the opportunity to, "self actualize within a culture of mutual respect". However, the principal also acknowledges that not everyone is clear on how to realize this goal including the use of the structures that are in place such as town hall and staff meetings, to explicitly and repeatedly provide clarity for moving forward and increasing the collaboration with all partners. Despite this the school is well positioned to take student achievement and adult learning to the next level.

## School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

|  |   |          |          |   |
|--|---|----------|----------|---|
| <b>School name: Jill Chaifetz Transfer High School</b>   | △ | ➤        | ✓        | + |
| <b>Overall QR Score</b>  |   | <b>X</b> |          |   |
| <b>Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.</b>      |   |          |          |   |
| <i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>   | △ | ➤        | ✓        | + |
| 1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?  |   | <b>X</b> |          |   |
| 1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?   |   | <b>X</b> |          |   |
| 1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?  |   |          | <b>X</b> |   |
| 1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress? |   | <b>X</b> |          |   |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>   |   | <b>X</b> |          |   |
| <b>Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student’s next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student’s learning.</b>  |   |          |          |   |
| <i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>   | △ | ➤        | ✓        | + |
| 2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?             |   | <b>X</b> |          |   |
| 2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?  |   |          | <b>X</b> |   |
| 2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?  |   | <b>X</b> |          |   |
| 2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?   |   | <b>X</b> |          |   |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>   |   | <b>X</b> |          |   |

### DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, 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.

| <b>Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.</b>   |                       |   |  |   |                   |   |                       |
|--|-----------------------|---|--|---|-------------------|---|-----------------------|
| <i>To what extent do ...</i>   | △                     | ➤ | ✓  | + |                   |   |                       |
| 3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?   |                       |   | X  |   |                   |   |                       |
| 3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?  |                       | X |  |   |                   |   |                       |
| 3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?  |                       |   | X  |   |                   |   |                       |
| 3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?   |                       |   |  | X |                   |   |                       |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>   |                       |   | X  |   |                   |   |                       |
| <b>Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.</b>   |                       |   |  |   |                   |   |                       |
| <i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>   | △                     | ➤ | ✓  | + |                   |   |                       |
| 4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?  |                       | X |  |   |                   |   |                       |
| 4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning? |                       |   | X  |   |                   |   |                       |
| 4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?   |                       | X |  |   |                   |   |                       |
| 4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?   |                       |   |  | X |                   |   |                       |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>   |                       | X |  |   |                   |   |                       |
| <b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>  |                       |   |  |   |                   |   |                       |
| <i>To what extent do...</i>  | △                     | ➤ | ✓  | + |                   |   |                       |
| 5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?   |                       | X |  |   |                   |   |                       |
| 5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?  |                       |   | X  |   |                   |   |                       |
| 5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?   |                       | X |  |   |                   |   |                       |
| 5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?   |                       | X |  |   |                   |   |                       |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>   |                       | X |  |   |                   |   |                       |
| <b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>  |                       |   |  |   |                   |   |                       |
| △  | <b>Underdeveloped</b> | ➤ | <b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b> | ✓ | <b>Proficient</b> | + | <b>Well Developed</b> |