

Quality Review Report 2009-2010

Jill Chaifetz Transfer High School

High School 379

778 Forest Avenue

Bronx

NY 10456

Principal: Anne Fennelly

Dates of review: February 8-9, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Michael L. Schurek

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Jill Chaifetz Transfer School is a high school with 131 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 54% Black, 44% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 6% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 69.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

This transfer high school successfully partners with the Bronx Works organization to develop and maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes towards learning. Together they nurture the academic and personal growth of its students, all of whom have experienced difficulties in their previous high schools. Individual graduation plans are designed for each student, all between 16 and 21 years of age, to ensure that graduation requirements are fulfilled as they complete ungraded subject and credit recovery classes.

The school has made significant improvements since its last Quality Review. For instance, it has decided to use specialized assessment tools in English language arts and math, accompanied by shorter interim assessment cycles to identify trends, establish goals, monitor progress and adjust educational practices. These actions have resulted in increased Regents' pass rates in most subject areas.

Teachers regularly meet in teams to examine student data and to design improved classroom strategies. They also participate in, and conduct, professional development that is building instructional coherence and leadership skills. All teachers use a common lesson template based upon the 'workshop model' to differentiate instruction and scaffold learning. However, teachers' abilities in this regard vary and this area continues to be a work in progress with the aim of ensuring multiple entry levels and extensions for students. Teacher teams are organized according to scheduled common preparation periods that do not foster the teams' accountability for targeted groups of students. Action plans are made transparent through clear displays and can be articulated by all constituents. However, these plans do not contain benchmarks and interim goals to enable school leaders and faculty to measure progress along the way in order to make timely adjustments to increase student outcomes.

Parents praise the caring, safe school environment and feel that their children are truly getting a second chance to be successful in school and in life. One parent exemplified this by openly stating, "This school has saved my son's life." While community involvement has recently increased, a parents association has not yet been established to include parents effectively in decision making at the school level. Teachers and partnership staff provide students with effective intervention through tutoring before school, after school, during lunch and on Saturdays. In addition, teacher to student ratios are kept to a minimum to provide greater opportunity for individualized attention during the school day. These efforts have enabled the school to earn extra credit on its progress report for exemplary proficiency gains for overage and under-credited students.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Relationships among students, teachers and school leaders are warm, respectful and accepting, resulting in a nurturing environment that is conducive to learning and supports the growth of students and adults.
 - o Each student has an advisor who meets with them three times each week to build relationships that support success. Advisors regularly review data with students to keep them on track to graduate. They conduct home visits in cases requiring attendance or social-emotional intervention.
 - o The school uses data and surveys to listen to students' views and design improvements that motivate them. As a result, the school allows students to wear hats and outer garments during class and utilizes a rotational schedule to avoid first period punctuality failures. As one student put it, "Everyone accepts you for who you are at this school."
- The school's systems and partnerships support students and their families in continual learning and promote students' personal growth and development.
 - o This school collaborates with Bronx Works, a community-based center that provides funding for five full-time student advisors and a program director. Advisory personnel conduct individual and group advisories each week and have developed a robust internal capacity to provide personal services, such as home visitation, to students and their families. This practice enables students to alter behaviors, such as tardiness or disorganization, that have caused them to be unsuccessful in the past.
 - o Professional development activities have enabled the school to develop a behavior support plan to accentuate positive behaviors and diminish past negative choices. This plan contributes to a safe and respectful environment and includes regular celebrations of students' academic successes and positive practices.
- Through the regular use of a wide range of relevant data, leaders and faculty have an understanding of the performance and progress of individuals in each subject.
 - o Because of irregular patterns of past student attendance, system-wide data systems such as ARIS and Acuity cannot provide adequate information for analysis. As a result, the school supplements this data by administering a specialized intake assessment as well as reading and math periodic assessments once during each of the school's three course cycles. These results are combined with class-level data to differentiate instruction and determine next steps for individuals.
 - o Teachers utilize specialized software in each subject to generate bi-weekly progress reports that enable students to track progress in meeting their subject goals and individual graduation plans. These reports are shared with families and used by advisors to support students. Teachers

also use this data to adjust instructional practices, such as expanding format choices when designing project-based learning activities.

- The principal is creating a learning community that is focused on student outcomes, with a vision to accelerate learning.
 - o The school uses data from multiple sources, including Star reading and math assessments, to develop focused goals and action plans that are easily understood and articulated by all constituents. Staff stand united in their quest to bring success to their students, who share a history of disengagement from traditional school settings.
 - o School leaders have increased community involvement through a number of specialized events such as back-to-school barbeques, multi-cultural nights, and ongoing celebrations of student achievement. Students develop ownership of school matters in their new leadership class where they are responsible for special events, student government, teacher interviews and serve as ambassadors to school visitors.
- The school has established effective systems for monitoring teaching practices, with a clear focus on improving instruction through increasing consistency and coherence.
 - o School leaders support instructional coherence by using observation protocol tools and student data to provide feedback to teachers. As a result, all lesson plans utilize a common format and incorporate higher-order thinking skills to differentiate instruction and scaffold learning.
 - o A consultant coach visits the school weekly to mentor teachers in their classrooms and to support the ongoing professional development and work of teacher teams. These practices enable teachers to focus on using data to improve student outcomes.
- Professional collaboration is a high priority and faculty profit from varied opportunities to share and develop strengths as individuals and members of the teaching community.
 - o Teachers use common preparation periods to work collaboratively to develop strategies designed to improve student outcomes, such as strategic student groupings and effective differentiation. All team members embrace this practice because they feel empowered to make decisions with support from colleagues and the administration.
 - o Professional development occurs twice each week during the school day in addition to bi-weekly after-school sessions and aligns directly to school goals. Teachers have created and displayed their own teaching goals and frequently conduct professional development, thereby building capacity and leadership.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase the efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability of teacher teams by ensuring that members of designated groups can meet regularly to improve classroom practice and share responsibility for targeted groups of students.

- o The school is organized into two teacher teams consisting of six teachers each and one smaller core data team that meet at least once each week to develop strategies to better meet student needs. Because these teams are organized by common planning time, not student groupings or teacher assignments, they are unable to share responsibility for targeted groups of students. As a result, teams duplicate each other's work and focus on overlapping groups of students.
- o The school currently has seven student advisors and eleven teachers who work together for the students, yet advisors are not part of the collaborative teams, thereby missing an opportunity to gather and contribute information to ensure student success.
- Ensure that parents are key partners in their child's education by involving them in school-level decision making and providing supports to enable their participation in important school activities.
 - o While parents praise the administrators, teachers, advisors and other support staff for the school's caring environment, and say that the school wants to hear from them, their decision-making opportunities are presently limited to their Learning Environment Survey participation.
 - o The school has increased community involvement through a number of specialized events. However, the lack of an established parents association and inadequate parental representation on the school leadership team hamper efforts to unite the entire school community.
- Refine action planning by linking all interim goals to specific benchmarks for all plans to enable the principal and faculty to modify goals and objectives in a timely manner in order to optimize the impact of actions.
 - o School action plans generally use percentage-based target gains as the overall goal in the areas of credit accumulation, Regents pass rates, family participation and individual graduation completion rates. Interim benchmarks measuring progress towards these goals are not indicated. The lack of these structures hampers the school's ability to determine program effectiveness along the way and to allow for contingencies and make timely adjustments that improve outcomes. In addition, it limits the school's ability to align planning from one year to the next.
- Deepen differentiation of instruction so that all lessons engage students and offer suitable challenge at their level, including effective questioning that elicits higher-order thinking and extends learning.
 - o The school has adopted the 'workshop model' as its established instructional practice. Because this is a recent development, some teachers still spend too much time lecturing while others allow too much time for group exercises, thereby taking too long to actively engage students in activities that motivate and challenge them to learn.
 - o While teachers differentiate lessons and provide multiple entry points, extensions for all learners have not yet been developed in some classes. As a result, higher achieving students are not provided with opportunities to accelerate their learning consistently.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: Jill Chaifetz Transfer High School	△	▶	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	△	▶	✓	+
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			X	
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?			X	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?		X		
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X	
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	▶	✓	+
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			X	
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?			X	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?			X				
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			X				
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?		X					
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X				
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?			X				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			X				
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?			X				
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals 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 progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?		X					
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed