

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

Joseph B. Cavallaro Middle School

Middle School K281

**8787 24th Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11214**

Principal: Stephen Rosenblum

Dates of review: November 30-December 1, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Jacqueline Grossman

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Joseph B. Cavallaro is a middle school with 1297 students from grade six through grade eight. The school population comprises 10% Black, 20% Hispanic, 31% White, and 39% Asian students. The student body includes 14% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 94.5%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- A very strong sense of community promotes a nurturing environment for students in which their needs are met.
 - Parents, students and teachers cite the easy accessibility of administrators that enable them to communicate freely. Students are ambitious and have a strong desire to succeed academically as well as to be good citizens. They are involved in the daily functioning of the school, for example, over two hundred students are part of the iSquad, which, with remarkable efficiency and skill, oversees the school's one-to-one laptop program.
 - Every child is known well by at least one adult. When asked about students selected at random, for example, the assisted principals each immediately provided detailed, accurate, and deeply individualized histories of each child. As a result, the school is able to quickly respond to concerns and provide the appropriate support.
- A culture of high expectations for all students pervades the school, resulting in an environment that is highly conducive to learning.
 - Classrooms and hallways filled with rubrics for student work and reminders about student behavior are constant visual reminders of the school's expectations. Issues are immediately addressed with phone calls and letters home. Many opportunities to get help or make up missing work are built in to the school day, such as the zero-period program. The school's website is an effective tool for communication that provides ongoing access to all families about assignments and expectations. Parents are invited often to school events and are well supported by staff in receiving assistance for all concerns both academic and social-emotional.
- Effective support, both internal and external, results in a high degree of personalization for support of individual student development.
 - A group of teachers are reading a text about how to support students with behavioral challenges. This was borne out of ongoing exposure the staff received through a partnership organization. The staff's ongoing commitment to better understanding adolescent development results in students expressing that the school is a "second home" and they love coming to school.
 - Several effective partnerships, including their extensive after school program, provide ample academic and emotional supports. Many community service projects help develop a sense of responsibility and make the school an important anchor in the neighborhood. Projects such as Pennies for Patients engage the children in character development, and promote thinking skills as the children consider all aspects of this endeavor and make critical decisions about the money raised.
- The school provides a solid academic curriculum, enhanced by a wide array of enrichments that result in high levels of aspiration among students.

- As a one-to-one laptop school, teachers utilize interactive tools to engage their students. Immediate access to cutting edge information has made the standards based curriculum come alive for many of the students. For example, groups of struggling students collaboratively produce digital movies that require them to do research, write, and communicate effectively, strengthening their basic reading and writing skills.
- An expansive array of enrichment classes provides many opportunities for students to discover talents and strengths. Attendance rates are very high, because students say that they do not want to miss a chance to enjoy their talent classes. English language learners, particularly, are integrating language more quickly because of their inherent interest in the material being covered.
- The school uses assessment data to make appropriate school-wide decisions for students as well as to impact curricula and organization.
 - Summative assessments are supplemented with project based tasks that effectively incorporate the use of technology. Assessment analysis determines placement in classes, for English language learners, accelerated students, and struggling students. The Common Core State Standards are being incorporated in to some revised rubrics, for example, in sixth grade writing that has already elevated the quality of written work being produced.
 - The sixth grade collaborative teaching team revises their common assessments to ensure access for all. They have revamped some unit exams so that English language learners, special education students and honors students, while being tested on the same material, each take versions that meet their developmental needs. This has resulted in better mastery of content for all students and higher course grades for all populations.
- The school is reflective about the changing needs of students, resulting in better targeted supports for struggling learners.
 - The school makes decisions as necessary to ensure that curriculum and organization are responsive to student needs. After reviewing grade wide data, the seventh grade team added extra support classes in mathematics after school. Most notably, the school revamped its budgetary priorities in order to turn three classes into four. This required numerous programming adjustments but has resulted in much more individualized attention for struggling learners.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop greater capacity in differentiated instruction that promotes meaningful interaction so that all students receive an engaging, lively and dynamic education that meets their individual needs.
 - Some classes are highly energized, while students are passive learners in others. Few options for students to engage in conversation indicate many missed opportunities to make instruction more student centered. Time is spent engaged in low-level or simplistic activities such as copying notes or

completing repetitive worksheets. Students report that some of their classes are “just too easy.”

- The school as a whole is structured to meet the differentiated needs of students, and teachers have been provided with a great deal of professional development to support it, but it is not yet sufficiently developed at the classroom level. A students’ experience at the school is highly dependent upon which teachers they have, resulting in uneven access to high quality instruction.
- Refine currently existing teacher teams to more deeply incorporate a structured inquiry approach with committed goals and benchmarks.
 - The school has some structured collaboration in which everyone is involved. However, much takes place informally and is not focused on specific target populations, goals for students, benchmarks to measure progress, or implementation of school-wide change strategies.
 - Some teams have started looking at student work and revising tasks and assessments, however, as a whole, the teams are not yet engaging rigorously in these activities. One team, for example, was analyzing differentiated assessment results and using it to plan for future instruction, but another team was as yet not engaged in the ongoing examination of student work, with an agenda that consisted mostly of tasks unrelated to one another.
- Strengthen use of classroom data to ensure that teachers’ planning and practice is directly impacted by the identified needs of students and used to set meaningful goals.
 - While many classes have class-wide unit goals, those goals are not broken down in to component parts to foster effective grouping, and the goals are not deeply differentiated to represent the varying needs of the students. There is some budding evidence of the use of formative assessment to measure progress towards goals. For example, one teacher was using an interactive response system to quickly assess her students’ knowledge of a certain math concept so she could plan differentiated groupings, however, in most classrooms meaningful grouping was not observed.
- Deepen and extend feedback practices to incorporate reflection, promote understanding of next steps, and foster intellectual growth.
 - Progress reports sent home to parents frame their child’s accomplishments only in terms of quantity and not in terms of quality. They list assignments completed but make no reference to the quality of those assignments and do not identify any specific next steps for students. Parents and students speak in general terms about student strengths and weaknesses and are unable to identify specific goals for growth.
 - Student comments on work are often generic, unspecific, and do not promote reflection. Students struggle to identify their best work. In some classes, teachers have students engage in peer to peer feedback but these practices are not yet fully developed throughout the school.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: Joseph B. Cavallaro Middle School	UD	D	P	WD
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, 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		

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>	UD	D	P	WD
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

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>	UD	D	P	WD
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

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>	UD	D	P	WD
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	

Quality Review Scoring Key

UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed
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