



**Department of  
Education**

*Joel I. Klein, Chancellor*

**Quality Review Report  
Division of Performance and Accountability  
2010-2011**

# **Quality Review Report 2010-2011**

**John H. Finley**

**Elementary School – Middle School M129**

**425 West 130 Street  
New York  
NY 10027**

**Principal: Odelphia Pierre**

**Dates of review: March 23 - 24, 2011**

**Lead Reviewer: Gale Reeves**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

John H. Finley is an elementary school – middle school with 631 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 51% Black, 47% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 91.7%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school maintains a supportive environment with high expectations for learning and behavior that are consistently shared by parents and students.
  - Students actively participate in shaping school wide decisions, thereby bolstering their self-esteem and the development of their leadership skills. Input from the student government, which expressed the desire for more healthy food, led to the creation of a nutrition committee which helped to initiate a salad bar in the student cafeteria. Class presidents coordinate the school's Penny Harvest and contribute to the wider community by visiting nursing homes. Additionally, a review of the school survey, attendance trends, suspension data and incident reports led to peer mediation and an anti-bullying initiative geared to students. As a result, there is a decline in the number of such incidents. Students and parents also appreciate that they can turn to teachers and members of the pupil personnel team to help resolve personal issues and concerns that interfere with learning. As such, students report that they "feel safe" and are able to focus more on their academic achievement.
- The school sustains strong partnerships with varied community and cultural organizations that have a positive impact on students' social, emotional and academic development.
  - Partnerships such as focused collaborations with ASPIRA, CUNY Harmony, Harlem Y and Ramapo for Children, integrate well with other school-based supports to meet students' academic and social/emotional needs in a cohesive manner. Mentoring, counseling and college preparedness supports are deeply embedded in school culture and directly impact students' academic development, leading to improved student outcomes. In addition, the school's guidance counselor and nurse share strategies during faculty meetings and provide workshops so that teachers are better prepared to service challenging students. These services integrate well and directly impact students' social-emotional growth as noted in the referral rate to citywide children's services.
- The principal and staff view parents as key partners and keep them well informed of the school's programs and their child's needs.
  - The school conveys high expectations for students' attendance, social/emotional and academic progress in a variety of ways. Email messages, teachers' personalized phone calls and the school's automated messenger service keep families apprised of school goals and planned activities. Parents appreciate the accessibility of school staff. The attendance team's bulletin board celebrates students' achievements and their focused efforts result in the increased monthly attendance gains of specific students and grades. Consequently, improvement in academic achievement levels of targeted students is noted.
  - The home-school compact for learning led to the successful creation of the Parent Leadership Academy. The parent coordinator facilitates academy meetings on Wednesdays and ensures translation services are available. There is an increase in the parent participation rate, which positively affects their ability to actively support their children at home. Parent Association members

chaperone class trips, support teachers and mentor and coach other parents. The increase in adult-to-student ratio is conducive to optimal levels of personal success.

- The principal aligns resources and makes effective organizational decisions across all aspects of the school that support improvements in learning.
  - The principal's budgeting, coupled with staff input, results in strategic use of resources that are aligned to the school's goals. The principal ensures that teachers have multiple opportunities to meet, including daily common planning periods and frequent team meeting, in order to support data analysis and planning. Literacy and math specialists collaborate with and coach individuals and teams of teachers, who all share responsibility for a targeted group of students. A review of data revealed that a small number of students perform above grade level expectations. As a result, students are enrolled in the Urban Scholars program, which meets weekly on Saturdays in order to provide PSAT and regents support to higher achieving students and accelerate their learning.
- Teachers work effectively to analyze data and plan curriculum which informs instructional decision making.
  - Teacher teams utilize Acuity and create grade level benchmark unit tests in order to identify the strengths and needs of students with disabilities and English language learners. Strong teachers strategically support the most vulnerable students during small group tutoring. Additionally, special education students are carefully integrated into general education classrooms. As a result, the special education subgroup successfully met state targets for three consecutive years and the number of students decertified from special education self-contained programs has increased, thereby closing the achievement gap for these students.
  - Teachers assess grades K-2 students using Success for All tools. These assessments are used to analyze trends, leading to the revision of instructional methodologies and techniques which target the identified needs of small groups of students, with a focus on building phonetic and comprehension skills. As such, there are noted academic gains in individual and identified groups of students.
- The school has established consistent structures for monitoring the effectiveness of pedagogy with a clear focus on deepening adult learning in order to improve instructional practices throughout the school.
  - Differentiated professional development is guided by a school- developed needs assessment, walkthroughs by the administrative team, as well as clinical and informal observations. New teachers are assigned mentors to help them develop their pedagogical skills. Success for All consultants and coaches provide direct support to faculty with a focus on lesson planning and delivery. As such, administrators are able to efficiently identify the pedagogical trends throughout the school, provide demonstration lessons accordingly, and plan for future professional development which results in refined instructional methodologies and techniques during the Success for All reading block.

## What the school needs to improve

- Refine the curriculum, emphasizing rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills for a variety of learners with different needs.
  - Core staff members deliberately adjusted the curriculum in order to integrate standards into English language arts and math units of study. However, students are not engaged in the types of projects and tasks that apply knowledge and so their retention of content information is not solidified. Moreover, performance based tasks that probe for deep understanding and application of learning do not coherently extend across all content areas or grade levels so that every student is suitably challenged.
- Develop coherence and alignment of instructional practices so that all students make progress via differentiated learning experiences.
  - While some teachers employ critical thinking strategies, most do not yet employ open-ended, higher order questions that lead to increased levels of student engagement. As such, classroom discussions where students challenge and support each other's thinking are not the norm across grades and content areas.
  - While teaching strategies are differentiated in Success for All lessons, most teachers do not yet consistently tailor instruction to specific groups of students across other subjects and do not develop extensions to challenge higher achieving students so that they are able to apply learning to new situations and further accelerate their own progress.
- Deepen and expand teachers' understanding of collaborative inquiry in order to influence teacher practice and student outcomes.
  - While teams are teacher led, teachers are not receiving sufficient support to develop their own skills as facilitators of adult learning. As a result, teams do not reflect together on their facilitation techniques in order to deepen their leadership skills and refine tested theories to further accelerate students' growth and achievement.
  - Grade level teams meet biweekly to discuss specific skills and strategies. However the development of an inquiry approach is not well defined across all teams. As a result, team members do not consistently note trends, track data and integrate specific skills and strategies into current and upcoming units of study in order to further accelerate academic growth.
- Develop greater consistency in evaluating and adjusting instructional practices in order to build coherence and accelerate student learning.
  - School leaders and faculty are at the beginning stages of establishing timeframes to evaluate and align curricula, instructional units and practices at the upper grade levels across all content in response to student needs. Consequently, essential questions, real world connections, higher order skills generating testable hypotheses and sustained conversations that give children a chance to support their views with evidence, change their minds and use questions as a way to learn more, are not yet the norm.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: John H. Finley	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score			X	
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<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
<b>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.</b>				
<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	

<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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			
<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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			
<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>