

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

John Philip Sousa School

Middle School 142

**3750 Baychester Avenue
Bronx
NY 10466**

Principal: Casimiro Cibelli

Dates of review: December 14 – 15, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Linda Trifon

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

John Philip Sousa is a middle school with 955 students from six through grade eight. The school population comprises 70% Black, 26% Hispanic, 2% Asian, and 1% White students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 14% 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 92%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders make informed and effective organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals, which result in improvements in teaching and learning.
 - Strong leadership has propelled John Philip Sousa Middle School to become a caring and safe community focused on accelerating student learning and creating a positive and nurturing learning environment. To that end, former school deans are now learning environment officers (LEOs). These LEOs investigate attendance and behavior issues and problem solve with teachers and school leaders resulting in a decrease of suspensions and improved student demeanor, improving the tone of the school.
 - Teacher assignments and student programs align to the school's efforts to improve student-learning outcomes. The school assembled a team of teachers to focus on identified students with common instructional needs. Each teacher observes these students in their learning environments to identify particular learning styles. Instruction is planned accordingly, thus meeting student needs more consistently.
- The school has established effective systems for monitoring teacher practice that results in a clear focus on improving instructional practice.
 - School leaders make proactive performance evaluation and tenure decisions aligned to student work products through informal observations. These observations and the analysis of student data inform the school's professional development opportunities to support effective instructional practices. As a result of this focused feedback, teachers are beginning to implement effective strategies that meet student needs.
 - School leaders have a log of assistance that tracks the professional development provided for teachers. Topics were selected based on classroom observations and analysis of student needs and benchmarks for implementation are set. The network provides the school with a full time mentor to support new teachers resulting in an increase in teacher attendance as well as reduction of referrals.
- Internal programs and external partnerships provide students, teachers and families with opportunities that accelerate their social and personal growth.
 - School leaders plan an annual retreat in upstate New York where teachers engage in planned professional development activities designed to help faculty and staff create a respectful culture in the school. Team building activities target the social and emotional well-being of teachers resulting in heightened collegiality and a greater sense of school spirit.
 - The school received a Neighborhood Development Area Grant and formed a Girl's Club. Identified female students in grades six through eight, receive social-emotional support from social workers. Planned group activities address some of the issues that students face resulting in newly formed friendships and enhanced leadership skills. Affiliation with The Einstein Hospital provides science oriented workshops for children to learn the roles and responsibilities of medical personnel. This partnership has worked with teachers in the school's

science department to assist them in creating a school-wide science fair. As a result, enriched science laboratory experiences are planned, generating heightened enthusiasm and greater student participation.

- School leaders communicate high expectations for attendance, behavior and academic performance to students and families that resulted in fewer suspensions.
 - The school communicates high expectations for attendance, behavior and academic performance. On-line technology programs provide a structure and system wherein teachers and parents monitor student attendance and behavior. The piloted “en-grade,” an on-line web based program provides opportunities for parents to check on their child’s progress and provide support at home. This has increased parental involvement in the students’ education.
 - Systems and structures are in place to support and accommodate parents. The school has identified parent and community leaders who together with the parent coordinator, work to involve parents in the life of the school. For example, the school engages parents in teacher/student portfolio discussions to provide feedback to students and keep parents abreast of student needs.
- The school provides a supportive, safe environment where students are engaged in their learning and want to succeed.
 - School leaders have created a supportive environment. Cultural luncheons and potluck gatherings provide multiple opportunities for the staff to come together resulting in enhanced collegiality and professional sharing. Students benefit from the many after school athletic and artistic programs as well as receiving academic support from their teachers. One parent shared, “Categorically, this is a safe learning environment.” Another parent stated, “This school has had a great impact on the lives of the people they service.”
 - Guidance counselors and learning environment officers are visible and help school leaders foster an academic tone. Students are engaged in their learning and want to succeed. “Our goals are to work hard and go to college,” said a student. Students feel supported by their teachers. One student shared, “Teachers care about us; they treat us like we’re one of their own!”

What the school needs to improve

- Develop a consistent school-wide design for curricula, which underscores the importance of teaching critical thinking skills.
 - Curricula and academic tasks are mostly short answer activities. Tasks assigned are not sufficiently challenging for all students and do not take into account the diversity of learners, resulting in uneven levels of engagement. Teacher questioning does not lead to high levels of student thinking preventing students from performing at higher levels. Lessons designed by teachers do not consistently provide entry points suitable for all learners. The lack of academic rigor, especially in special education classrooms, prevents students from accelerating.
- Develop teachers’ practice so that mini-lessons, informed by formative assessment data, are differentiated and meet student needs.

- Teachers do not consistently differentiate mini-lessons to support students at their entry levels. For example, in special education classrooms, whole group lessons were not differentiated resulting in low levels of student engagement. In a class for English language learners, all students worked from a textbook despite the fact that students were at different levels of language acquisition. In general education classrooms, lessons typically were question and answer sessions. This lack of differentiation to meet the needs of all students results in low-level performance outcomes.
- Teaching strategies and questioning techniques do not push students to use their critical thinking skills and routines lead to general lack of engagement. For example, students are asked to copy notes into their notebooks without follow-up. This results in uneven levels of student engagement, thus reducing student motivation and preventing the school from accelerating student progress.
- Identify the strengths and needs of all student subgroups data to ensure instructional strategies are differentiated in order to track student progress.
 - Currently, the school does not specifically identify and evaluate the strengths and needs of all student subgroups. The tasks and assessments administered and analyzed do not provide teachers with an accurate picture of individual student's abilities in targeted subgroups. This prevents teachers from effectively differentiating instructional strategies to ensure an increase in student-learning outcomes. Thus, the lack of on-going tracking of student progress significantly hampers teachers' instructional decisions to revise teaching strategies and/or curriculum to improve outcomes for subgroups.
- Evaluate the school's system for assessing students to ensure that appropriate information is measured and accurate student performance shared.
 - Teams of teachers gather data on student learning outcomes from pre-and post short-answer assessments. The school does not yet have systems in place to regularly evaluate what data is organized or whether these assessment practices provide an accurate picture of what all students need to know and what they have learned. As of yet, the school does not evaluate what assessment data is shared with students and families to ensure that they understand next learning steps needed in order to achieve success limiting the school's ability to ensure cohesiveness.
- Expand goal-setting procedures to ensure that precise and differentiated learning goals for individual students and student subgroups, in order to accelerate learning outcomes for targeted students.
 - The analysis of formative data is not rigorous enough to determine the progress of all student subgroups. The school does not engage in on-going formative assessments to monitor the progress of students. This prevents the school from identifying learning trends, strengths and areas of need at the school and classroom levels. As a result, individual differentiated learning goals are not set. The lack of established interim benchmarks across all grades and subject areas inhibits the evaluation of student progress, thus contributing to teachers' inability to revise and refine students' learning goals with precision. In addition, the lack of specificity in setting student goals results in the lack of the improvement of classroom practice.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: John Philip Sousa	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