

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

John Philip Sousa Middle School

11X142

**3750 Baychester Avenue
Bronx
NY 10466**

Principal: Casimiro Cibelli

Dates of review: November 3-4, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Jacqueline Gonzalez

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

John Philip Sousa is a middle school with 822 students from grade 6 through grade eight. The school population comprises 71% Black, 26% Hispanic, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 92.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal makes strategic programmatic and staffing decisions in ways that promote the achievement of school goals and address students' identified learning needs. (1.3)
 - The school's schedule is designed to ensure that all teachers meet at least twice weekly on grade level teams and additionally across grades for inquiry work, enabling them to engage in collaborative planning, alignment of tasks to the Common Core Learning Standards, and review of data, including student work, leading to improvements in practice and student growth. Strategically, sixth grade teachers, who serve the highest percentage of struggling learners, meet four times a week with a focus on English language arts and math.
 - The principal uses teacher evaluation to identify teacher strengths to address specific student needs. A teacher with demonstrated math expertise is assigned as the math specialist for all sixth grade classes. As a result, students benefit from her data-driven instructional planning and delivery, and they are demonstrating progress in the use of math content vocabulary and skill development.
- The school's positive, safe learning environment supports social-emotional needs of students and encourages academic success. (1.4)
 - Teachers state that they "enjoy coming to work here" noting that there is an increasingly collegial atmosphere. Students also shared that they genuinely enjoy being in the school and that adults are available to them in a variety of ways. Students and parents consistently refer to designated Learning Environment Officers, who serve as student support staff for both academic and social emotional matters, as "go to" persons if they have a problem or just need to talk with an adult. Data indicates that the school's efforts have increased attendance and reduced the suspension rate to 0%.
- The principal and his extended cabinet organize and analyze a wide range of data on student learning, as well as non-academic areas, to provide an overview of school wide patterns of strengths and areas of need. (2.1)
 - School leaders' review of a wide range of available student performance data, including item-skills analysis, attendance, suspensions, and incident referrals, highlights school-wide strengths, and needs focused on increasing students' reading stamina and academic language across grades. Data binders with student information provided to each teacher contains relevant information that is used in planning differentiated instruction.
 - School leaders' review and analysis of student performance identified learning trends specific to learning gaps in reading. Additionally, the review of relevant information around teacher practice and its effectiveness related to student growth has led to teacher assignments

matched to their content expertise and student needs, a focus on vocabulary development, and emphasis on improving teacher practice in differentiated instruction.

- The school community has defined and prioritized a clear set of goals that are aligned to key Common Core Learning standards and designed to accelerate student progress and performance.(3.1)
 - A collective understanding of the school's direction for improving student performance and progress for all students is reflected in school wide goals. The needs to increase proficiency in English language arts and math, increase the use of differentiated instruction, and improve questioning strategies are in the Comprehensive Educational Plan and articulated by school leaders and teachers. As a result, there is increased coherence and ownership of the school's direction for student learning.
 - Leadership's analysis of results from previous evaluative reports including the school's Learning Environment Survey, Progress Report, and Quality Review from the previous school year, specifically data revealing the need to target reading instruction and plan for specific student needs, provides direction for the current year action plans and goals. This is evidenced by addressing students' reading stamina and pedagogical gaps in questioning and differentiation strategies.
- Professional development for teachers and administrators is targeted and aligned with school goals and needs relative to building an understanding of the Common Core learning standards. (4.3)
 - The school's professional development offerings, designed to build capacity in literacy and math and looking at student work against standards, are aligned to school goals and include opportunities for teachers and grade level teams to participate in training facilitated by the literacy coach. Additional support, provided by consultants in strategies for the "100 Book Challenge" literacy initiative and Response to Intervention, is leading to improved teachers' instructional planning and assessments aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards.
 - The school's current structure for professional development, allows teachers to alternate leading the work of teacher teams including developing agenda items, facilitating meetings and monitoring the team process, thus embracing opportunities for leadership development. Faculty and administrators are encouraged to step into leadership positions as a response to student and school wide needs, widening the scope of influence that staff have on improving practice and student outcomes.

What the school needs to improve

- Expand curriculum to include rigorous and meaningful academic tasks in all content areas enabling diverse learners to demonstrate their learning and produce meaningful work in all subject areas.(1.1)
 - The current curriculum includes grade level themes and pacing calendars for relevant units of study in each subject. There is also an expectation

that teachers will use higher order questions and explicit academic language strategies in all content areas. However, there is inconsistent evidence of how learning tasks to accomplish these expectations are designed and implemented in math and in some units in social studies. Additionally, content area lessons are not suitably adjusted for identified subgroups, including English language learners, and students with disabilities. Therefore, assignments vary widely in terms of rigorous learning experiences for many students and are uneven across the school.

- Improve instructional practice so that across classrooms teachers plan for and execute lessons that include intentional scaffolds and extensions to increase student engagement and higher order thinking. (1.2)
 - Across grades there is evidence that some teachers group students for instruction in a variety of ways and provide explicit vocabulary support in the introduction of lessons. However, in classrooms with high numbers of English language learners, and students retained in grade, there is inconsistent evidence of specific strategies to support these students in accessing language and directions for tasks. In other classrooms, students who are finished with an assigned task have to wait for the rest of the group before proceeding to another level of work. Therefore, groups of students across classrooms are excluded from fully participating in the lesson and limited in their ability to cognitively engage in assignments at their appropriate level.
- Develop teacher capacity to create content specific rubrics and assessments that result in meaningful feedback to students and adjustments to instruction that ensure that all students are learning. (2.2)
 - Teacher teams are engaging in the process of looking at student work against general rubrics to assess student performance and gather evidence of learning gaps. However, this work is still in its beginning stages and rubrics that are in use are not task specific across content areas. Therefore, feedback to students is general and limits their ability to take targeted steps to demonstrate their learning and improve their work products.
 - The principal has defined clear expectations for teachers to use explicit strategies to ensure that all students comprehend concepts presented in lessons. There is some evidence that teachers use mid-lesson questioning to assess whole class understanding. However, strategies are inconsistent across classrooms and in some lessons, checking for understanding is only evident at the end of the lesson. This limits opportunities for teachers to make timely instructional adjustments that ensure all students are learning.
- Ensure that frequent and targeted feedback to teachers across school is consistent across leaders and provides specific, coherent strategies to improve instruction so that all students have an optimal learning environment. (4.1)
 - The school has begun to use the Danielson framework as their research based rubric for supporting teacher development. Teachers are engaged

in professional conversations about planning coherent instruction. However, formal and informal observation reports from school leaders are not yet fully reflective of the language of the framework and offer inconsistent feedback around priorities, expectations, and best practices of instruction. This limits the capacity of the school to ensure consistency of teacher effectiveness across classrooms.

- School leaders have made strategic decisions around retention, hiring, and reassignment of staff based on data from the observation process, reducing the number of ineffective staff based on the annual evaluation of practice. However, there are some classrooms where teaching assignments are not well matched to student needs, and reflect inadequate use of staff time. Consequently, this negatively affects learning environments for students and limits their academic progress.
- Reevaluate systems for organizing and sharing student assessment data so that there is alignment of grading practices and rubrics to ensure consistent and effective feedback to students about their learning. (5.2)
 - School leaders and faculty have begun the work of looking at student work products and assessing them based on a four point Common Core Learning Standards rubric. However, the current system has not yet determined whether other grading practices across the school are consistent with the rubric, thus precluding feedback to students from providing a clear portrait of content proficiency and mastery level in order to support their academic growth.
 - School leaders have developed and distributed data binders to teachers with summative as well as predictive data about student performance. However, there is only an informal monitoring of whether this collection of data is helpful to teachers or of how this data is used by teachers to make necessary adjustments to instruction. Additionally, conversations with teachers reveal inconsistent use of the data across classrooms. As a result, there are missed opportunities to make timely adjustments to instruction, interventions, and extensions for student learning.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

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 as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			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, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?		X		
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?			X	
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students progress toward school and class expectations?			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 staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?		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, guidance/advisement 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, with particular attention to the CCLS?		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