

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

The Jim Thorpe School  
Elementary-High School K370  
3000 West 1<sup>st</sup> Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11224

Principal: Susan Goldberg

Dates of review: January 8-10, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Sheryl L. Watkins

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Jim Thorpe School is an elementary through high school with 270 students from kindergarten through grade 12. The school population comprises 45% Black, 24% Hispanic, 21% White, and 10% Asian students. The student body includes 19% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 79% of the students enrolled and girls account for 21%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 82.0%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school has established very effective systems for observing and monitoring teacher practice with a clear focus on improving pedagogy and student performance. (4.1)
  - Highly effective systems for conducting teacher observations and determining their effectiveness focus on the school's chosen competencies within the Danielson framework, a researched-based system for evaluating teacher effectiveness. The principal has set forth clear expectations and provides ongoing support for teacher practices as needed that includes, but is not limited to, procedures and routines, curriculum and instruction, and assessment that is specifically connected to goals that teachers have developed from competencies within the school's chosen teacher effectiveness framework. Administrative observations, as well as peer-to-peer intervisitations, address evidence found during class visits including topics such as designing coherent instruction, using questioning and discussion techniques, and using assessment in instruction. Feedback clearly identifies strengths and challenges and provides actionable, targeted next steps to promote improvement. In addition, formal observation documents identify where observers saw teachers applying this feedback to their instructional practices. Administrators consistently review student work products, and data related to Individualized Education Plan (IEP) goal mastery, to correlate teacher practice to student performance. As a result, 60% of those staff members who were determined to be in need of improvement have now demonstrated continued satisfactory performance on both informal and formal observations for the current school year.
- The principal and her staff work as a unified team to assure a calm, respectful and orderly learning environment where the growth of students and staff is a priority. (1.4)
  - A tiered school-wide Positive Behavior Intervention System sets clear expectations for behavior and academic pursuits. At the high school level, students "Keep it Real" and at the elementary level they become "Papa's Pride" or are "Little Chiefs" as they demonstrate the clear behavioral expectations within classrooms, hallways, the cafeteria and in the community. All teachers have been trained in and consistently exercise the practices of Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI). Individual behavior plans for some students delineate the specific targeted conduct in need of improvement and the reinforcers identified to assist these students in improving their behaviors. The consistent implementation of these plans has resulted in an average decrease in time outside of classrooms in sensory reinforcement locations to address these issues from 75% of the instructional day to 21% for those students who still have these behavioral plans. Information specific to student improvements and how to support continued progress at home is shared with parents, often on a daily basis. These consistently applied systems for managing the learning environment ensures that all students and staff know and engage in behaviors that promote high levels of engagement in learning activities for

students and assures time within classrooms to continue academic growth.

- Students have high praise for the school's practices of empowering them to advocate for changes within the school community and their own pursuits. Dissatisfied with the lunch schedule, the high school students petitioned administration for a change of their lunch period. In conjunction with the Office of Food and Nutrition, their request was accommodated, and lunch now occurs for them at the end of their instructional day. Students who wish to participate in community-based instruction are required to engage in an interview process, provide two teacher recommendations, and demonstrate ongoing social-emotional and academic success. Student empowerment leading to opportunities for greater post-secondary outcomes is an embedded component of the school's goals. As a result, at the student meetings there was unanimous agreement that they are empowered to share their voice and are prepared to "move on" to their future.
- The comprehensive school curriculum offers a wide range of opportunities for students to explore standards-based learning experiences that support their academic progress. (1.1)
  - Ongoing revisions to the school's coherent New York State aligned curricula, based on the integration of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), and continuous analysis of student work products at teacher team meetings, has resulted in revised units of study that now demonstrate multi-level tasks and rubrics to assure that all students are cognitively engaged. For example, the use of informational text to support project completion is an embedded component of curriculum maps, ensuring the grounding of their project creation in evidence from text. In addition, explicitly aligned tasks centered on language acquisition and usage, a key focus of instruction school-wide, makes it certain that students continue to build their vocabulary. Continuing progress is noted in the depth of the projects and in the inclusion of content specific vocabulary that students across grades and classes are now producing.
- The school's shared beliefs around student learning is understood and practiced by staff in order to meet students' needs and improve learning outcomes. (1.2)
  - Every member of the school community consistently practices collaboratively agreed upon and articulated beliefs related to student learning. Across all sites, and within every classroom, teachers assure a safe environment where student interests are tapped, teachers model learning expectations, visual and other supports are present and all curricula is grounded in the creation of final projects that allow students to demonstrate their learning. In addition, this ensures that each student is an active participant in their learning. For example, one class crafted poems, wrote rap songs, or created illustrated books to demonstrate what they had learned from their current unit of study. This process assures that multiple entry points and activities assure meeting the needs of all students. This results in high levels of engagement and work products to demonstrate connection to real life experiences, which reveal high levels of thinking, that are meaningfully connected to their learning experiences.

## **What the school needs to improve**

- Deepen teachers' responses to all student work to reflect guiding comments and levels of academic performance to convey high expectations and clear next steps. (2.2)
  - Across all grades, teachers routinely apply rubrics to student work products. Most rubrics assess the independence and accuracy of task completion, and others include meeting the expectations of the task and the associated standards. Work products and projects, both displayed on bulletin boards and within student work folders, reflect teacher comments that are specific to the task presented, but do not always offer actionable feedback or next learning steps. There is some evidence of incorporating the assessment of skills taught and the demonstration of learning in the rubrics. This limited feedback sometimes prevents teachers from using this information to guide modifications to skill-based instruction and students from consistently having the information needed to take the steps necessary to improve their learning outcomes.
  - As most instruction is language-based, there are substantial opportunities for teachers to assess what their students understand thorough questioning, and checklists are very often provided for students to meet the expectation of their projects. Small group instruction routinely meets students at their level and targeted support is provided to promote achievement. Nonetheless, the provision of providing students with opportunities to self-assess, based on their cognitive levels are not always in place, preventing all students from knowing their next learning steps, thus limiting the consistent ownership of progress.
- Extend the effective practices of communicating with parents and families to include current ability levels and expectations for learning to ensure that students and families know how to reach higher levels of achievement. (3.4)
  - Parents report that they are routinely advised of school events, topics being studied, and progress towards meeting IEP goals. Monthly school newsletters provide generic articles and class information along with resources for parents, progress reports related to meeting IEP goals are sent home every five weeks and at the end of each unit of study. However, parents are not consistently advised of their children's current ability levels in their core subjects, preventing them from knowing detailed information of current performance and what specific supports to provide for their children at home. This limits parents from engaging in full partnerships with the school related to academic standing to ensure higher levels of academic achievement.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: The Jim Thorpe School	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			X				
<b>Instructional Core</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, physical and health education, 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 that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to curricula, engaging and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?			X				
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels?			X				
<b>School Culture</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X			
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?			X				
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet students' learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			X				
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework 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 <b>inquiry approach</b> that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			X				
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?			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>