



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

**Quality Review Report
Office of Accountability
2008-2009**

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

John C Thompson School

Elementary School 052

**450 Buel Avenue
Staten Island
NY 10305**

Principal: Evelyn Mastroianni

Dates of review: October 23 – 24, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Barry King

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

John C Thompson School is an elementary school with 643 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 3% Black, 17% Hispanic, 70% White and 10% Asian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 93.4%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 40% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The school has made significant recent advances in data-driven instruction. The basis of this is the regular assessment of students through periodic formal testing and in-class observation, so that teachers have a precise knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses in each student's work across all core subjects. On the basis of these findings, individual students have short-term learning goals related to rubrics. They understand them well because they help to set them, and the goals are also communicated to parents. Teachers are increasingly competent in align the level of work to match the goals. The school does not yet have measurable long-term achievement goals for each student to calibrate whether the students' rates of progress are fast enough. The way in which the faculty have raised their game in terms of data-driven instruction has resulted from their own determination to move forward and good support through multiple professional development opportunities. These have included their own strongly collaborative approach to share practice with each other. Staff are aware of the next steps they need in their professional growth but the school does not have a system for translating these needs into written personal development plans linked to the school's priorities.

The school's high expectations for the personal growth of students have resulted in a harmonious community where students feel very safe and relate well to one another. This supports teachers when they experiment with new learning approaches as they can be confident that students will do their best. Students testify to how much they enjoy their lessons.

The school runs very smoothly and the principal has supported the staff well in ensuring they are supplied with the resources they need. The administration analyzes thoroughly the data on the school's performance, and communicates information about each student's progress clearly to staff. The communication of data about the achievement of sub-groups is less systematic. The school's leaders are very aware of the need to accelerate the progress of the higher achieving students and are building strategies to do this. They have a passionate commitment to the students' education and welfare and have demonstrated in the past that they are not afraid to take bold decisions to make the changes they feel are necessary.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school regularly assesses students across all core subjects, using a range of assessment tools and rubrics to diagnose the strengths and weaknesses in their work.
- Teachers use data to conference students in supporting them to set their own short-term learning goals, which are then communicated effectively to parents.
- Data-driven instruction is well established in several classrooms, with tasks differentiated to match students' capabilities and engage them in their work.
- The extensive professional development opportunities have resulted in a marked improvement in the school's capacity to use data to set goals and align instruction.
- High expectations for the students' personal growth have resulted in their very positive attitudes and respect for one another.
- The principal ensures that the school is very well organized and has developed a strong collaborative culture among staff, who support each other very well.

What the school needs to improve

- Set long-term measurable goals for each student, class and grade, with interim goals against which to gauge their progress toward them.
- Focus on improving the annual progress of the higher achieving students, especially in English language arts.
- In consultation with each teacher formulate a written personal professional development plan that is individualized according to need while taking account of the school's overriding priorities.
- Communicate more systematically the administration's analysis of subgroup data to assist the planning of instruction.

Part 3: Main Findings

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school assesses students on a regular basis across all core subjects. It does so using a wide range of assessments including formal instruments such as Acuity, the early childhood literacy assessment system and Pearson. In addition, staff use informal, continuous classroom assessments, focusing on how well students perform against rubrics and standards that are clearly posted in classrooms. Students are encouraged to self-assess as a means of getting them to understand how they can improve. In this way staff build a constantly updated picture of the progress of each student, what they can do well and what the next goal for their learning should be. This puts them in a strong position to align their instruction to learning need. They record this data in easy-to-access folders and data binders. Staff have worked hard to develop their individual systems but there is insufficient opportunity to share best practice in managing the large amounts of data they generate, and help for which is something desired by the staff.

Teachers mark written work using a grading scale of 1 to 4 for the testing grades so that students develop a clear idea of their overall progress. However, the frequency and the extent of constructive comment on written work varies between classrooms. The cabinet collates data in a number of ways that are useful to decision making, such as plotting the performance of subgroups. It has not so far displayed these findings in ways that make clear the patterns in the data to all staff. The school has developed regular channels of communication to parents, for example by using a folder that accompanies each child home on a daily basis to indicate the homework. Parents also frequently receive test results, which they "sign off". The school has its own website that parents appreciate, and plans to create a password system to allow parents access to data on their children as soon as they are able.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

In its drive to raise achievement the school recently introduced a school-wide approach to the setting of short-term learning goals for students, which has become well established. The administration and faculty have developed a culture where the focus on student goals is part of their routine work. Older students write out their own goals, with advice from the teachers. These goals are related to assessment rubrics, so that students are working towards competencies that will help them perform at higher levels. The goals are displayed clearly in most classrooms as constant reminders, with staff finding their own inventive ways to present them. As a result, students know what they must do to improve. For example, one grade 1 student said, "I have to make my writing

neat and practice my finger spacing.” The goals are also sent home to parents, which puts them in a stronger position to support their children’s learning. The teacher signs off the goals when students reach an acceptable level of accomplishment and new ones are then set, but they are not time framed in advance.

The school is very conscious of the aim of ensuring that all students make at least one year’s annual progress but it does not set differentiated long-term goals for each student, class and grade based upon student capabilities. This means that it does not yet have the means of assessing whether each student’s progress is fast enough over the longer term. The previous Comprehensive Education Plan was produced through widespread consultation but the process for its renewal has yet to get under way this year.

High expectations for the conduct of students and the way they should relate to each other run through the building. As a result, the school is an orderly and calm environment where students respect each other and feel very safe.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The school provides a broad curriculum for all students by ensuring that all relevant core subjects are taught in each grade. The arts provision is particularly strong, with both visual art and music taught to all students. Close attention is paid to State standards. The curriculum is differentiated to support students who find learning difficult, for example through push-in and extended day arrangements, but there is less enrichment to challenge further the faster learners. The students much enjoy their lessons and show this by being attentive and engaged. Their motivation has been helped by the significant strides teachers have made in using data to differentiate instruction to suit individual needs, and examples of this are found in many classrooms. For instance, in a grade 4 class in social studies, data was used to form groups of students of different capabilities, who were given research tasks of different levels of challenge investigating facts about Native Americans. This enabled all groups to make worthwhile progress. The school is aware that it needs to accelerate the year-on-year progress of many of its level 3 and 4 students, particularly in English language arts, and it has used data to identify exactly those skills that need to be promoted through classroom instruction in order to do this.

The administration budgets very prudently to support teachers with the correct resources. This is much appreciated by staff, who feel that their leaders are responsive to their needs. The school has recently acquired a small number of smart boards, which it intends increasing, and staff have made good use of these to make lessons more stimulating. In one grade 5 math class a small group of students, who were taking their turn to use the smart board, were fascinated by the way they could rotate an image of a protractor, measure an angle and then check their results.

Underpinning all class work is the excellent learning climate. Students’ capacity to work harmoniously together is very supportive of the teachers’ use of varied learning styles to engage students, as they know that students can be trusted to co-operate.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Teachers work very hard to improve their practice and are reflective about how to do so. They receive professional support in numerous ways, including attendance at external courses, working with the literacy and math coaches, feedback from observations by the administration and collaboration with each other. The informal observations by the three members of the administration are particularly extensive, with a target of 18 a day, and they focus closely on the impact of teaching on learning. Teachers collaborate with each other extensively, through weekly grade meetings and inter-visitations, which are encouraged by the administration, and much informal discussion. The impact of this range of professional support is evident in the substantial improvement in the capacity of the staff to use data to set goals and drive instruction, which has been a major focus of the recent work of the school. The work of the Inquiry Team does much to extend the school's collaborative arrangements as the membership largely consists of the cabinet, which in any case meets frequently. However, the Team's findings have been disseminated to the faculty to aid instruction.

The staff are conscious of the next steps they would like to undertake in the development of their own instructional skills and have a broad idea of what should be the central focus for the school. They do not have written personal professional development plans with documented goals against which their professional growth might be evaluated.

The school harnesses external support to support its goals, such as Music Outreach to enrich its arts programs. It also provides regular workshops and other meetings for parents to empower them to help their children to learn.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school's strong assessment processes mean that staff have a precise and frequently updated overview of each student's progress across the curriculum. On the basis of this, teachers adjust short-term goals and instruction on a regular basis. Giving students the responsibility for self-assessment and goal writing supports this process well. Teachers want the best for their students and push them on but they are not in a position to assess whether the rate of student progress is fast enough. This is because they do not have a framework of long-term, time framed achievement goals with interim benchmarks to measure the pace of learning.

The school's leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development through their close monitoring of its performance. They have demonstrated the readiness to take bold data-driven decisions to realize their goals. A good example of this is the departmentalization of instruction in the upper grades. Following a period of specialist teaching in all core subjects in grade 5, this was introduced in September 2007 to grades 3 and 4 as well. The school is alert to the benefits of this, such as rooms dedicated to particular subjects and a growth in teaching

expertise through specialization. At the same time, they have not lost sight of the potential dangers of compartmentalization. A group has been established to evaluate these arrangements.

The school was dismayed by its grade in the most recent progress report and has responded with determination to put things right. It has analyzed test data to see exactly where the problems lie and is developing a strong focus on the weaker areas, namely the progress of higher achieving students, especially in English language arts.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: John Thompson School	△	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>				
	△	➤	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?				X
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?			X	
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?			X	
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X	
Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student’s next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student’s learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>				
	△	➤	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?			X	
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			X	
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?			X	
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYQ, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

<i>To what extent do ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?			X	
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?			X	
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?				X
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.

<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?			X	
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?				X
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?				X
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X	

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

<i>To what extent do...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?			X	
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?				X
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?				X
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X	

Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed