

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

James P. Sinnott

**Junior High School 218
370 Fountain Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11208**

Principal: Valena Welch-Woodley

Dates of review: March 21-22, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Lori Bennett

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

JHS 218 is a middle school with 600 students from 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 43% Black, 36% Hispanic, 1% White, and 20% Asian students. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 89.9%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Students benefit from a responsive school environment that promotes academic and personal growth resulting in increased student outcomes. (1.4)
 - The entire school community works diligently to assure a trusting respectful environment. The principal and staff members work to know each student to address their social and emotional needs in a caring environment. The school-wide advisory program supports students' social emotional development and a majority of the students interviewed agree that school leaders, counselors, and teachers know "who I am and my concerns." As a result of attendance initiatives, positive intervention strategies and emotional supports, students are focused and engaged in their work for greater success.
 - The administration encourages student voice and input in school decision- making and provides structures and practices within the school to support this goal. The Wellness Committee, letters to the principal, a student initiated debate team and a school-wide collaboration with *The Trust for Public Land* school yard renovation project gives students multiple opportunities for leadership. Students state, "Our school is rebuilding and changing for the good, our principal wants to hear what we have to say." As a result, students have embraced multiple opportunities to make changes within the school.
- School leaders review a wide array of data that results in the successful identification of weaknesses thereby guiding school improvement plans. (2.1)
 - School leaders use data from ARIS, Progress Reports and State achievement data to gain a good understanding of the school's strengths and needs. This comprehensive analysis from multiple sources revealed that students are not making adequate progress in both English language arts and mathematics. Instructional materials, including a new text book series in all subjects and additional classroom libraries with a broader selection of non-fictional texts have resulted in students having a wider choice of materials to support academic achievement.
 - Administrators and teachers use Periodic Assessments and are knowledgeable of the performance levels of students thus; planning documents and academic tasks reflect preparation for their diverse needs. Additionally, the literacy coaches analyze periodic and summative data which is shared with the instructional cabinet and teacher teams delineating student performance trends and required instructional adjustments, thereby leading to a clear understanding of student needs.
- School leaders and teachers use effective tools to analyze student data and collaboratively develop grading policies resulting in consistent feedback across the school and accurate assessment of student performance. (2.3)
 - The instructional cabinet meets weekly to analyze student data and trends in student performance providing the school with opportunities to

understand who the students are as learners and what they know and are able to do. Additionally, this structure provides the team with actionable data and allows for timely interventions and revisions of school-wide initiatives.

- Teachers create and utilize data binders to collect and aggregate periodic assessments and interim assessments data by subgroup including students with disabilities and English language learners (ELLs). The weekly data team meetings provide multiple opportunities for teachers to work together to create common assessments and analyze trends in student performance and adjust instructional practices to accelerate the academic progress of their students.
- The principal and her team have developed data driven goals that are evident in school planning documents resulting in clear guidance for school improvement. (3.1)
 - A comprehensive review of a wide array of data sources informed the development of the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) and clearly delineates the school's overarching goals of instructional and organizational coherence for increasing academic rigor by revitalizing the curriculum to make it both engaging and rigorous. This provides a cohesive vision for school improvement efforts which is shared by all stakeholders.
 - The schools instructional cabinet comprised of administrators and teachers review data in order to develop strategic school goals. For example, a review of the Learning Environment Survey (LES) led to the goal of improving the learning environment by implementing the Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) program school-wide in order to address the social and emotional needs of students and foster improvement in student behavior. Students indicate an awareness of the positive effects of the program noting a stronger focus on mediation and problem solving to resolve conflicts, leading to a safe and orderly school environment.
- Effective partnerships along with professional development result in a school culture that promotes the academic and social development of students. (4.4)
 - The school provides effective professional development and internal supports to provide students with a range of opportunities to explore post-secondary options and develop socially. The After School specialized high school tutorial program resulted in a substantially increased number of eighth grade students' acceptance into specialized high schools as commitment, goal setting and high expectations are emphasized. The Explorers Program empowers students to be self disciplined, aspire to higher education and develop goals. Teachers and counselors organize external opportunities to explore post- secondary options including local and out of state college tours. These opportunities promote students self esteem, academic skill development and showcase student's talents and creativity to extend career choices.
 - Strategic partnerships provide targeted youth development services support students academic and social-emotional needs. Classroom Inc. provide students with enrichment and academic intervention support

through computer based simulations on topics that emphasize English language arts and mathematics and require students to work in collaborative teams to solve real-world problems. The Future Leaders intervention initiative offers guidance supports as well as partnering students with highly qualified mentors to support the attainment of leadership skills, thus enhancing student development and promoting academic achievement.

What the school needs to improve

- Accelerate the development of rigorous academic tasks aligned to key standards in order to promote the development of higher order thinking skills. (1.1)
 - Curriculum maps show that the school has identified several key standards and units of study in English language arts that include Common Core aligned performance tasks. However, classroom visits reveal that these tasks are not yet embedded in all content areas including science and social studies. Challenging tasks and activities designed to close the achievement gap are not the norm across all classrooms. This limits exposure to rigorous standards based instruction, rendering the learning experiences inconsistent across the school.
 - Teacher teams' work is emerging to revise units of study and create cognitively engaging academic tasks. However, they are in the beginning stages of using student work to refine tasks using Depth of Knowledge (DOK), student work products and data to ensure that all students including, English language learners and students with disabilities are consistently engaged.
- Deepen instructional practices so that questions promote student engagement and discussion resulting in expanded student thinking. (1.2)
 - While a few teachers demonstrate the ability to provide lessons with multiple entry points for students questions and prompts, this practice is inconsistent across classrooms. In many of the classrooms observed, teacher questions were often delivered during whole group and provided limited opportunities for expanded thinking and student-to-student dialogue. This limits student's ability to learn from each other and maximize academic growth.
 - While some students have the opportunity to peer assess and reflect on their learning, teacher questioning does not consistently push the thinking of all students. For example in some mathematics classes students engaged in higher order mathematics concepts, while others were rudimentary whole class lessons lacking rigor and engagement. Therefore, across the school there are uneven opportunities to propel student thinking and high levels of engagement.
- Ensure that instructional resources align with students needs and are effectively utilized across the school to engage all students in realizing their goals and achieve at high levels. (1.3)

- The school has purchased a plethora of resources and instructional materials to augment the academic program and support student learning. Given the learning needs of the students and variations in pedagogical skill of the staff, specifically in the area of utilizing technology to enhance engagement and instruction, the resources are not being utilized to full advantage. Consequently, resources are not being sufficiently used to support and augment the learning needs of students as evidenced in limited engagement in technology for all students and staff.
- Teachers are scheduled for structured professional collaborations on a weekly basis. However, the use of protocols to guide team meetings in order to ensure a focus on addressing the student's instructional goals is not yet an established practice. Teams are now beginning to implement protocols for looking at student work as an essential process during their teacher team meetings. As a result, teachers have a limited understanding of how to use the results of the analysis to inform curriculum and instruction, thus minimizing student outcomes.
- Strengthen the use of consistent assessment practices so that teachers continuously gauge progress for individual students and subgroups in order to improve outcomes. (2.2)
 - Teachers individually and in teams, routinely gather and analyze student data including formal and interim assessment information. This provides them with an overarching view of the accomplishments and struggles of their students with a view towards knowing what their students know and are able to do. However, this analysis has not yet extended to targeted subgroups, specifically English language learners. Thus, limiting the ability of teachers to appropriately adjust instructional practices to meet the needs of all students.
 - Teachers have begun to utilize formative assessment strategies during classroom instruction. A few teachers are beginning to use exit slips to gauge student understanding at the end of a lesson. Goal setting conferences allow students opportunities for self-assessment. However, these practices are implemented at varying levels across the school thereby limiting teachers' ability to make appropriate and timely instructional adjustments to meet the needs of all students.
- Deepen the analysis of student work during the observation process and consistency of frequency to ensure a clear focus on academic rigor and targeted student needs to improve professional growth. (4.1)
 - While the school leaders conduct observations and daily walkthroughs, the frequency of feedback to teachers varies among administrators. In addition, feedback does not always include an analysis of students' work and data. This lessens opportunities for reflection on instructional practices to enhance student achievement.
 - Although the school provides many professional development experiences for teachers, the activities are not specifically differentiated to capture strengths and challenges of teachers thereby limiting their ability to identify skills that improve lesson delivery.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: James P. Sinnott School JHS 218K	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