

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

J.H.S. 292 Margaret S. Douglas
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle school K292

301 VERMONT STREET
BROOKLYN
NY 11207

Principal: Gloria Nandan-Williams

Dates of review: December 15, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Carolyn Yaffe

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

J.H.S. 292 Margaret S. Douglas is a junior high-intermediate-middle school with 736 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 62% Black, 30% Hispanic, 1% White, 5% Asian students and 1% other students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 89.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has a coherent vision for both the development of rigorous tasks using key standards and for the role that the examination of student work plays in the refinement of tasks so that a variety of learners are engaged and challenged (1.1)
 - The school has a long-standing and comprehensive cycle for the revision of curriculum that occurs every summer and is informed by exit conferences with teachers, student work and formative and summative assessment data. This process yields curriculum maps, units of instruction and assessment rubrics that are aligned to State standards and this year push the key standards of writing with evidence across disciplines in order to align with the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). As a result of this work to address sequence of units, standard foci and rigor of tasks, student writing samples across grades and subject areas, including those of students with disabilities and English language learners, consistently demonstrate rigorous thinking through the use of evidence to formulate and defend arguments and to justify thinking in math work.
- The school effectively manages time and human resources to meet the instructional and organizational needs of the school. (1.3)
 - The school's focus on rigor and differentiated instruction is supported through its allocation of resources and weekly teacher team meetings. Several organizational decisions were made this year to support the school-wide writing focus, including moving one teacher into a literacy coaching role and moving another teacher who effectively scaffolds curricula to have greater rigor to support English language learners. Teacher teams meet for ninety minutes every week with a focus on adjusting tasks through the analysis of student work, with a particular focus on the identified CCLS. As a result of all of these decisions, there is school-wide cohesion to the types of tasks and thinking that students are being asked to engage in and demonstrate. Additionally, students writing portfolios consistently reflect work products that require critical thinking, primarily by creating and justifying arguments through use of evidence.
- An atmosphere that is conducive to learning has been established across the school community that supports personal growth for both students and staff. (1.4)
 - As a result of data from the prior year's School Survey, which indicated that teachers wanted a larger role in decision-making, a cabinet was formed that has 16 members who cut across grades, subject areas and constituencies. One important decision the cabinet has made thus far is to schedule regular, monthly whole school assemblies to norm large group behavior in the school community. As a result of this decision, the cabinet has seen reductions in disruptive behavior in large group assemblies and class behavior tracking sheets across different grades also indicate a reduction in disruptive behaviors and classroom removals.
 - Homeroom teachers monitor attendance, student goals and are responsible for making contact with parents when there are signs of academic struggle. In addition, homeroom teachers in the 8th grade, in conjunction with the guidance department, are also responsible for tracking high school applications. As a result, teachers can speak specifically about where their students are in terms of

both predictive and curriculum-embedded assessments and students indicate that they know whom to go to first when they are struggling and report that teachers and the principal “help us think through decisions and help us with our behavior.”

- Across classrooms, teaching strategies consistently meet the needs of a variety of learners, which leads to meaningful participation and work products for students. (1.2)
 - o In the school community there is a strong belief in the power of a common curriculum, clear expectations and unified framework for lesson planning that includes a clear objective, guided practice and checks for understanding. As a result, students experience consistency in understanding task expectations through detailed rubrics. They also experience consistency in terms of a balance of direct instruction, pair or group work and structures such as whole class discussions, think pair-shares and exit slips to assess understanding. Questions embedded in tasks and posed during class push students to synthesize evidence towards an assertion and students across classrooms are able to speak to what they are working on and why they are working on it. For example, in an 8th grade English language arts class, students were asked to apply Robert Frost’s theory of decision-making from “The Road not Taken” to a short story and defend their thinking with examples from both texts. When asked, a variety of students were able to explain the thought process they were engaged in and how it connected to the class goals for argument and use of evidence. As a result of both the unification of structures and the expectations connected to key standards, students develop portfolios that reflect extended argumentative writing in humanities and hypothesizing and justifying in science and math.
- Teachers use common assessments and rubrics across grades and subject areas to determine and meet the needs of students. (2.2)
 - o Grades and subject areas work from a common curriculum and common assessments to track mastery from a grade and subject perspective. Teachers use class tracking sheets and “hot lists” of students who are deeply struggling with particular skills in their own classrooms and bring these to team meetings to identify common trends within subject areas. Analysis of common assessments in math revealed that students across the board struggled with non-routine problem solving and the math department adjusted their tasks to include more real-world application of mathematical concepts to push conceptual understandings as well as incorporate the practice of asking students to justify their mathematical thinking. As a result, the level of rigor of math tasks was raised over the course of the year and student work in math portfolios includes explanations and rationale.
- The school administration uses the observation process to support teachers, identify trends and align professional development so that the school community is focused on several key practices that elevate classroom practice and student learning. (4.1)
 - o School leaders chose to focus primarily on two Danielson competencies based on their teacher observation data from the prior school year: 2b (Establishing a culture for learning) and 3b (Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques). Teachers were divided among the three school leaders by content area to further identify trends in content areas and each teacher received several cycles of feedback by the late fall. School leaders agreed to further unify and focus their feedback on key areas within those domains such as having teachers outline pivotal questions in their lessons and giving feedback on the effectiveness of

those questions to deepen content understanding. This clearly defined focus and unified approach has led to movement of specific teachers in these areas, as evidenced by the progression of feedback in their observations and classroom practice.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop a more cohesive system to track learning goals at the teacher team and classroom level to ensure that student learning goals are being met. (3.3)
 - Although all teachers keep data binders and fill out class assessment sheets at the close of each culminating task, the school has yet to refine a system that allows school leaders to aggregate this information to have a constantly accessible view of progress against goals for the different groups of students being monitored.
- Develop a unified tool to make data available to school constituents at all levels so that information is more accessible and useful for decision-making. (2.3)
 - Although there are classroom-level tools to capture progress towards mastery and those are shared during teacher team meetings, teachers do not use a set of unified tools to do this work and at the cabinet level there is not one tool where classroom performance assessment data can be viewed and aggregated to facilitate clearer understanding of how students are moving across classrooms. This impedes the school leaders' ability to quickly understand overall trends in student performance and progress towards goals.
- Establish a school-level system for measuring progress towards long term and interim goals so that adjustments can be made in a timely fashion to ensure movement toward goals. (5.3)
 - While there is a system in individual classrooms for teachers to track progress towards mastery of skills and content by standards, at the school leader level there was not a clear articulation of where the school is in relation to their goals, in particular with the groups of students they had targeted for movement based on summative data from the prior year. This affects the ability to make timely adjustments or interventions to ensure that goals are met.
 - While the school has accounted for teacher development needs in relation to the CCLS in their goal setting for this school year, there is not yet an articulation of a trajectory of professional learning that will build capacity towards the school's instructional goals and the ultimate expectations of the CCLS. This affects the ability for teachers to see the work of this year in the larger context of CCLS readiness.
- Create clearer goals for teacher team work so that effectiveness can be monitored and practices adjusted against a common understanding of what success looks like. (4.2)
 - There are processes and protocols in place during teacher team meetings to examine student data and work that yield adjustments to both task development, curriculum scope and sequencing and supports and scaffolds for students. Structures to support more effective facilitation of meetings by teachers in support of school goals, however, are not currently in place. As a result, there is not as clear a connection as there could be between the granular movement of specific students with the larger instructional goals of the school.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: J.H.S. 292 Margaret S. Douglas	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