



**Department of
Education**

Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Quality Review
Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning
2013-2014**

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

James P. Sinnott

Middle-High School 218

**370 Fountain Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11208**

Principal: Lisa Ann Hermann

Dates of review: May 13 - 14, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Elif Gure-Perez

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

James P. Sinnott is a middle-high school with 488 students from grade 6 through grade 10. The school population comprises 46% Black, 35% Hispanic, 2% White, and 16% Asian students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 22% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 90.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is underdeveloped.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders are beginning to develop a positive school culture and a safe learning environment that support varied personal and academic needs of students. (1.4)
 - The principal and her leadership team instituted systems and structures for safety and discipline to reduce suspension data and build staff buy-in and student voice across the school community. As part of the leadership's approach to culture building, school leaders took specific actions such as creating and communicating a ladder of referral for incidents, regularly examining data around referrals of at-risk and targeted students,, expanding counseling opportunities, and providing gender-based and other afterschool programs driven by student choice to ensure a personalized approach to meeting students' needs. These actions are beginning to move the tone and culture of the school towards a generally respectful one that is conducive to student learning.
 - School leaders are developing structures to ensure that students are known well and are provided supports aligned with their social emotional needs. The advisory program, personal outreach to students by the principal, assistant principals, guidance team, and teachers, provides supports, and specific referrals to the guidance team and community based organization services provide a foundation for adults to have ownership over groups of students. Teachers also discuss academic and personal needs of at risk students at team meetings and communicate suggested next steps to the administrators and the pupil personnel team. Additionally, the Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) program allows teachers and students across classrooms to have common language around expectations and related accountability, while providing personalized tools to address social emotional challenges. As a result, students, particularly in the sixth grade, are beginning to receive targeted supports and guidance towards academic and personal progress.
- School leaders are in the process of consistently articulating high expectations to faculty and parents and developing a system for accountability so that the school community takes responsibility for student achievement and personal growth. (3.4)
 - School leaders communicate high expectations for teaching and learning using a common language through the newly adopted curricula and via growing an understanding of effective instruction as captured in the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Vendor led training is provided to teachers to unpack and understand the newly adopted curricula so that they can support students towards the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Additionally school leaders provide supports during teacher team meetings and other dedicated time for teacher collaboration, while inter-visitations are leading towards a common understanding of evidence for effective teaching across classrooms. School leaders expect teachers to implement newly acquired teaching practices into their classrooms and provide them with feedback to improve their practices. School leaders also established support structures such as Beacon Afterschool program, tutoring

during lunch periods, and a Mobile Response Team for counseling and family outreach as well as the use of the EnGrade online grading system for progress reporting and feedback to students and families. Thus, the school is developing structures all in an effort to support students academically and social emotionally during their time at the school and towards post-secondary readiness. The ongoing focus on implementing these supports with detail and clarity is leading to a consistent message on how best to impact and prepare students for their next level of their education career.

- School leaders and faculty are in the process of curricular planning and modifications towards CCLS alignment and integration of the instructional shifts to ensure access and cognitive engagement for variety of learners. (1.1)
 - Despite the delivery challenges at the start of the school year, the school leaders and faculty have been fully engaged in the process of implementing and modifying Codex and CMP Math, the newly adopted curricula in English language arts and math respectively, with a focus on integrating the instructional shifts. Teacher teams meet weekly to plan and modify units and lessons using some data gathered from end-of-unit assessments embedded in the curriculum. Adaptations such as the introduction of the mini-lesson format, grouping of questions based on tiers, front-loading of vocabulary with visuals, utilization of sentence frame, and patterned reading exercises, are efforts to provide access for students to the curricula and to cognitively engage them in written curricula, as evidenced in some classrooms. As a result, some teachers and students are able to articulate why and how the use of scaffolding tools and resources are helping some students to access learning and show progress.

What the school needs to improve

- Align teaching practices to the curricula and instructional priorities so that all students are engaged in rigorous work and supported towards exhibiting cognitive engagement and critical thinking in their work and discussion. (1.2)
 - The curricular units and the teaching practices in the school are beginning to acquire some commonality through the use of the newly adopted curricula and the use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. However, there is still a significant misalignment between written curricula and teaching practices in most classrooms. For example, the use of videos and picture support to contextualize learning and frontloading content specific vocabulary is evident in some unit/lesson plans. In some of the classes visited, instructional videos were played in the beginning of the class without any given focus for student listening and/or note taking. No questions were asked to elicit thinking from students that is connected to the theme or the topic of the lessons at hand. Furthermore, student groupings in many classrooms were primarily random and did not evidence language or instructional scaffolds that structure and guide student discussion in small groups. Teacher questioning in most classrooms did not push student thinking because questions posed were neither appropriately rigorous nor connected to the instructional objectives of the lessons at hand. As a result, teacher led and student driven discussion in most classrooms were low level as were the student work products observed during classroom visits and viewed during student work meetings.

- Improve the use of common assessments by explicitly linking them to school's instructional priorities so that formative and summative data analysis is utilized to measure student progress towards school-wide goals and effectively adjust instructional practices. (2.2)
 - Despite the fact that teachers have begun to use common assessments embedded in the adopted curricula in ELA and math, and they review the results to identify student needs in classrooms, the school does not have a process in place to analyze the findings of these assessments in order to yield a clear picture of student needs across grades and subject areas, especially against the school's instructional priorities and the school wide goals. Additionally, the school does not have an agreed upon process in place to analyze findings from the common assessments to revise and refine curricula and instructional practices as well as assignments. As a result, data gathered from common assessments is not providing a picture of how students are able to progress in the content and skills towards mastery of standards in a given subject area within a grade and across the grades.

- Make strategic organizational decisions aligned to school's instructional goals and provide ample professional development, coaching, and academic intervention, so that all students have access to effective teaching and academic success. (1.3)
 - Although the school leaders communicate the need for additional supports in building instructional capacity through coaching and school-based professional development (PD), as well as the need for increased academic intervention and guidance support services, funds are primarily utilized for external PD, other services, and administrative staff. As a result, the school does not have sufficient supports to address students' and teachers' instructional needs that are aligned with school wide priorities. This hinders the school's ability to improve teacher practice and push student growth towards the expectations of the CCLS as evidenced by low levels of student work products. Furthermore, administrators are not able to clearly articulate the rationale for their hiring practices and teacher assignments. Student groupings are not strategic and aligned to student needs. For example, all English Language Learners are grouped together in one class regardless of student's level of English Language proficiency, hindering student's ability to access learning with their native English speaker peers and minimizing teacher's ability to meet varied language acquisition needs of the students. This diminishes the collective capacity at the school to meet teacher needs, student needs, and provide students access to college and career readiness opportunities.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

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| School name: James P. Sinnott | UD | D | P | WD | | | |
| Overall QR Score | X | | | | | | |
| Instructional Core | | | | | | | |
| <i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i> | UD | D | P | WD | | | |
| 1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards? | | X | | | | | |
| 1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the 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 | | | | | | |
| School Culture | | | | | | | |
| <i>To what extent does the school ...</i> | UD | D | P | WD | | | |
| 1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports 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 those expectations? | | X | | | | | |
| Systems for Improvement | | | | | | | |
| <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 student 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 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection? | | 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 | | | | | |
| 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 | | | | | | |
| Quality Review Scoring Key | | | | | | | |
| UD | Underdeveloped | D | Developing | P | Proficient | WD | Well Developed |