



**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 Madison

High School 425

**3787 Bedford Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11229**

Principal: Jodie Cohen

Dates of review: May 27 - 29, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Rod Bowen

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

James Madison is a high school with 3,055 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 17% Black, 16% Hispanic, 46% White, and 21% Asian students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 57% of the students enrolled and girls account for 43%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 90.6%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- High expectations are purposefully communicated so that students and families are clear on pathways towards college and careers and teachers are mutually accountable for improved teaching and learning. (3.4)
 - The school's leadership has established consistent means of communicating high expectations to staff including the identification of model classrooms that exhibit exemplary practices aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, regularly scheduled faculty, department and cabinet meetings, and a bi-monthly newsletter. This newsletter, entitled The Nexus, is dedicated to highlighting, among other things, instructional best practices, student scholastic achievements, professional development opportunities for staff, teacher team findings, and noteworthy staff such as the recognition of seven teachers nominated for Big Apple Awards because they, "inspire students, model great teaching, and enrich the school community." In addition, the school's administration has committed to providing all teachers with timely observation feedback that consists of a Danielson rating sheet from the Advance system, a modified, scored Danielson rubric, and low inference notes accompanied by strengths, areas for growth, and next steps for improvement. Such support and clear expectations have informed ongoing communication that extends beyond the time that is set aside in staff schedules for them to meet. An email amongst English as a second language teacher's stated, "We have discussed interventions and relevant options for differentiation for students when it comes to a difficult topic such as research papers. I want to share another document I created that you might find extremely helpful in using library sources such as...", thus evidencing correspondences common throughout grade and subject areas, leading to a shared focus of high expectations backed by support that is resulting in collegial practices that promote a collective investment in meeting expectations.
 - Through its houses that are purposefully named to reference college and careers, such as Bio. Med. House, International House, and Humanities House, the school promotes high expectations. Two houses, Law, and Informational Technology, both contain screened programs that all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, participate in their classes. Additionally, the houses offer career related courses such as computer forensics, business law, international relations, Microsoft certification, Shakespeare, and pathology. In addition, the school offers fourteen advanced placement courses, College Now offerings, and honors classes, that start in ninth grade. Consequently, over half of the 2013 cohort successfully completed approved rigorous courses and assessments as measured by the College and Career Preparatory Course Index. Thus, the themed houses and courses have informed students' sense of what is possible after graduation. One student claimed, "I'm certified in three different Microsoft applications. It's gong to easier for me to get a job." A student who is part of the Law House noted that in a class called "Mentoring", students developed lesson plans that will be used to teach elementary school students. "I don't want to be a lawyer. I know that I want to be a teacher, and I'm learning skills that will help me with that, even

though I'm in the Law House." Students also have opportunities to visit colleges, and college representatives come to the school to visit. Recently, eight colleges were on site to offer on-the-spot admissions to qualified students. As a result, 83% of the senior class has applied to college. Consequently, the school's systematic communication of high expectations, backed by strategic programming and opportunities, ensure that students have numerous opportunities to be prepared for success after graduation.

- The school leader strategically makes organization decisions and utilizes resources to effectively support school goals. (1.3)
 - The principal exerts a concerted effort to raise money to supplement the budget and achieve school goals and has hired a Public Relations/Grant Writer to support this work. Together they have brought in an additional \$75,000 to the school this year and have \$3,000,000 committed for next year. The vast majority of the school's budget is allocated toward staffing, and evaluation of candidate pedagogy prioritizes structures and activities that are student centered. Furthermore, hiring practices have evolved requiring a demonstration lesson and input from students. Additionally, the principal increased the college office staff, added an assistant principal of special education, as well as two compensatory-time personnel to maintain Instructional Education Plan (IEP) compliance. In an effort to address a school goal intended to increase communication and transparency regarding student progress and achievement, every teacher has either an iPad or a laptop that increases their use of Skedula resulting in the majority of teachers using the tool to capture student progress. In addition, iPads were purchased for the grade 9 self-contained classes to increase student-centered activities. APEX Learning and Plato were acquired to supplement learning in Regents courses and improve Regents pass rates. Furthermore, there are structures that allow teachers to work collaborative in both broad and niche teams with layered, yet collective accountability for the success of students. The school has developed strategic programming to ensure that students' academic strengths and challenges are reflected in classes they take. For example, in math there are single and double period courses offered in trigonometry and geometry as well as two, three, and four semester options in algebra and geometry, and classes are in place across subject areas for students who have earned credits, but have yet to pass Regents' exams. In addition to meeting English as a second language State mandates, English language learners are programmed together in science and social studies and experience a curriculum that is adjusted in collaboration between the teacher and the assistant principal of foreign languages and English as a second language, resulting in increased course pass rates for English Language learners as compared to data generated prior to the programmatic adjustment. The allocation of resources to provide the staffing and student programming needed to serve diverse learners has resulted in 76% of special education students in the 2017 cohort being on track for promotion. According to the school's Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP), the goal is 71%.
- The school's culture promotes safety and inclusivity through structures that ensure that each student is known, students have a voice, and student social-emotional needs are addressed. (1.4)

- The school prioritizes a strong collaborative relationship between the dean's office and guidance counselors and as such all discipline conferences begin with a review of student's academic status on Pupil Path, resulting in intervention plans that encompass both academic and personal behaviors. For example in one such plan, a student was scheduled for mediation with a peer to support conflict resolution and an opportunity to engage in an Apex learning class to help get back on track academically. All ninth grade students who matriculate with literacy scores of 2 or below are programmed into the Madison Academy for Citizenship and Community Service (MACCS), so as new students to the school they receive programming and experiences that will support their academic needs while exposing them to volunteer experiences that benefit their community. The school is broken into houses, which allows designated staff to be accountable for the education of smaller groups of students. This structure consists of house coordinators whose function is to ensure that students are supported and known throughout their high school experience. Life-skill based learning such as preparing for life after graduation and community involvement occurs in leadership elective courses, which contain heterogeneous groups of students. In addition, all seniors must complete a mandatory community service project as part of their participation government class. The schools' cultural expectations have resulted in a respectful environment with lower instances of cutting, increased student investment in being a member of the Madison community, and an increase in community service projects, specifically involving surrounding middle and elementary schools.
- Assessment practices across classrooms provide actionable feedback to teachers and students resulting in adjustments to curricula and instruction. (2.2)
 - Within the first eleven days of each semester, all content areas administer base-line assessments that are referenced in teacher team meetings to inform curricular adjustments in subsequent unit and lesson plans. The English language arts team was observed noting that though student essays were well-structured and referenced information from source materials, they were not proficient at connecting it back to their thesis statements and proving their counter claim. A review of minutes from the math team showed that students' work evidenced common inaccuracies and miscalculations with graphing questions. Next steps included revising the pacing calendar to accommodate the need to go deeper with graphing as well as new ways to represent the process. Students all stated that they were familiar with rubrics. They agreed that the subjects in which they use rubrics the most are English language arts and social studies, for essay writing. They also noted that in many cases they can use the rubrics to do some assignments over again for a better grade. In talking to students, though the quality of the feedback varied, all were able to discuss work products and next steps they would take to improve their efforts. Thus, assessment practices ensure that students and teachers receive feedback that is used to improve their work.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that curricula across grades and subject areas are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and integrate instructional shifts, yet are refined using student data so that all learners have access to rigorous tasks. (1.1)

- All curricula are teacher generated, with their efforts supported by ongoing professional development and online resources, such as Engage NY. There is a school wide focus on increasing the use of informational text as well as developing arguments and counter arguments. The social studies department uses the English performance task rubric to ensure coherence in writing between the two departments. When reviewing curricular documents representing instruction, seven of the fourteen classes visited, including an English as a second language class, Common Core Algebra, Global Studies, advanced placement English, advanced placement US History, and a Living Environment class for English language learners, had plans with clear references to either content and/or Common Core Learning Standards. While a social studies lesson plan noted leveled text based on ability, as well as station activities based on learning styles, the vast majority of curricular documents did not include planning that reflected thoughtful access for a diversity of learners. Consequently, inconsistencies are evident in ensuring that planning is standards aligned, purposefully integrates instructional shifts, is informed by student data so that strategic entry points can be leveraged, thus limiting providing all students with access to rigorous tasks that are cognitively engaging.
- Develop instructional practices across classrooms so that they reflect a set of beliefs that promote discussion and student work products; resulting in high levels of thinking and participation. (1.2)
 - The school is working to embody the belief that students learn best when instruction is student centered. There were commendable examples of this intent during classroom visits. Two students planned and co-taught an advanced placement English class within a unit where all students would be responsible for teaching their peers in rotation. English language learners were engaged in debate about Darwin's Theory where they grappled with questions such as, "Would mixing traits help an organism?" and "Which gene is more important now, and why?" In both animation and Microsoft certification classes, the teachers facilitated learning as needed while students worked individually or in pairs on projects. However, other classes reflected teacher centric, lecture style instruction with little to no opportunity for genuine discussion or student-centered learning. There were also examples of high levels of student thinking and participation. In a college ready class, students analyzed Shakespeare by translating it into the voices of various dialects and non-Shakespearean characters. In an algebra class, volunteers came to the board, wrote out their processes, explained them to the class and answered questions. Yet in a science class, though a student went to the board and wrote down his process, the teacher explained it to the class. In other classes, students spent most of the time copying notes while a small number of them repeatedly responded to low-level questions. In addition, there were some teachers observed answering their own questions. Such instructional inconsistencies reflect uneven levels of thinking and participation across classrooms.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: James Madison	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