



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

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

# Quality Review Report 2013-2014

**The James Baldwin School: A School for  
Expeditionary Learning**

**High School M313**

**351 West 18<sup>th</sup> Street  
MANHATTAN  
NY 10011**

**Principal: Brady Smith**

**Dates of review: Jan 6 - 7, 2014  
Lead Reviewer: Marisol Bradbury**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The James Baldwin School: A School for Expeditionary Learning is a high school with 260 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 44% Black, 48% Hispanic, 6% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 42% of the students enrolled and girls account for 58%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 71.1%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Teachers create and refine academic tasks that consistently emphasize rigorous habit and academic skills across the grades so that all learners are cognitively engaged (1.1)
  - The James Baldwin School is part of the New York Performance Standards Consortium, a network of New York schools who is granted the right to use a Performance Based Assessment system, rather than the standardized testing system of the Regents Exams with the exception of English. Across subjects, students develop skills and knowledge necessary for the creation of in depth projects. For example, in the Math for Social Justice class, students reflected on the idea that every human being has equal value and should have what they need to survive. Through research, budgeting, graphing and data analysis, students were grappling with social justice issues and how to use and read statistics to support a theory. In a social studies class entitled “Creating America's Frankenstein,” students reflected on the ideas of the American government and the ideal citizen. Through a course called “Eugenics,” students investigated how the proponents of eugenics were able to introduce and pass legislation that legalized sterilization, restricted immigration, and prevented interracial marriage. In English language arts, students write memoirs and literary analysis essays on one or two pieces of literature. All papers, reports and projects culminate in a formal oral presentation to a panel consisting of teachers and evaluators. Through these performance based assessment tasks (known as PBATs) and curricula that require research, analysis, personalization, writing and presentation skills, all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities articulate and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills.
  - Teachers plan and refine tasks using student work and data. The English teachers examine samples of students work using the lenses of research, writing and thesis statements. While reviewing a refined lesson plan and subsequent essays written by his students, the teacher discussed the progress specific to the implementation of the strategy identified by the team earlier in the term to help students write a concise thesis statement. Another teacher shared three samples of student work and her struggle to get students to include thematic concepts and academic language in their writing. Teachers reviewed the samples of student work and suggested the incorporation of tasks that reinforced definitions, application of concepts to ensure students were able to apply and analyze the concepts within the context of the essay. Two English teachers developed a lesson based on the results from an item analysis of a mock Regents examination. While one of the teachers conferenced with students who performed poorly, the second teacher incorporated a reflection sheet for students to share their progress and struggles on certain topics, a parking lot activity for students to share their questions and identify trends, a share out section for students to articulate the strategies used to understand certain questions, articulate concepts and skills so that students who did not master the skills had additional opportunities to gain mastery. This system of using student work to help plan and refine lessons ensures that all learners, including students with disabilities and students in the lowest third, have access to the curricula and are cognitively engaged.

- Teaching practices and routines reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how student learn best, and work products from their PBATS reflect high levels of student thinking. (1.2)
  - Teachers and administrators believe that students learn best by engaging them in a learning process that promotes inquiry, reading, productivity, self-reflection, and preparation for college. Across classrooms, teachers display essential questions, learning-targets, and graphic organizers about research and writing. The culminating products and presentations are done in front of an authentic audience, thus teachers create opportunities for students to self-assess, receive feedback, critique, and refine projects and presentations through collaborative and team building practices. For example, in two social studies classes, students sat in small groups while a student leader used a protocol to guide students as they presented and provided feedback on their essays and projects. Crew, the school's advisory program, is a building block for students and the community that reinforces the school norms and provides students with social and emotional support. In one crew class, the teacher conducted individual conferences to review students' academic progress while probing students on their work, effort and academic next steps. Once a year, students participate in a weekend retreat that promotes team and community building. The seminar courses offer opportunities for student discussion, sharing, and critiquing. These practices allow for collaboration, independent reading, writing, research, sharing out in groups, incorporation of real world application and connection so that students are able to see the link of concepts, themes and personal experiences to their projects and presentations.
  - Students' preparation and presentation of PBATs demonstrate their research and analytical skills as well as their embodiment of intellectual and moral integrity. For example, in "Math for Social Justice," students articulated the understanding of equality and fair distribution of goods through graphing, budgeting and basic algebra. In English classes, students' writing, drafting, and discussion demonstrated their ability to analyze two or more texts, write persuasively, cite supporting evidence while reflecting on influence, impact and transformative experiences. In social studies, students researched laws and restorative justice systems while reflecting on ways to improve self and school. Additionally, across subjects, students analyzed, and synthesized information from various sources through memoir writing, literary analysis essays and historical analysis related to the United States and other countries. Across classrooms, student work reflect high level of student thinking, reflection, and collaborative work that promotes participation.
- The school's focused efforts on maintaining a supportive, inclusive, and respectful environment strengthens the development of students' academic, social and emotional growth. (1.4)
  - The James Baldwin School accepts students who are over aged and under credited. As such, many students struggle with social-emotional and academic issues. The faculty and staff work collaboratively to ensure that each student is known well in order to support their social and emotional needs. The teachers, two social workers, guidance counselor, interns, and partners from Hudson Guild, Mt. Sinai Center and the Morningside Center meet weekly to review and discuss the plan of support for students with patterns of poor attendance, academics and/or behavioral concerns. Every student participates in Crew, the building block of the

school community consisting of a grouping of up to 15 students and an advisor. Crew advisors implement common practices with a focus on academic, social and emotional support, including: circles, student and teacher led discussion, and tracking of academic progress. Through these venues, students engage in active listening, respectful debate and participate in conversations about social justice and the core values of the school, which include supporting and respecting peers, teachers and staff. For example, in one Crew class, students shared their New Year's resolution and peers offered advice and specific actions they would take to support their classmates. Crew also offers a venue for reading, writing and study skills. Crew advisors conference with students regularly on their academic progress and next steps towards their goals. In one Crew session, the advisor asked a student to identify and list the specific steps he would take to complete his PBAT portfolio presentation. Through school-wide Town Meetings, the entire school community engages in conversations of discipline and school core values. Students stated that their teachers believe in them, push them to do better, and support them throughout the year. Students also shared that they feel increased self-esteem, more respect towards themselves, peers and teachers and are comfortable sharing their emotions and presenting their perspective in class and in front of a panel. These support systems have resulted in increased student performance reflected in the improved Progress Report grade of a "C" for the year 2011-2012 to a "B" for the year 2012-2013.

- Courses, tasks, and projects emphasize inquiry and mutual respect. Students share each other's work and offer constructive criticism and feedback before the PBAT panel presentations. Through this process, students stated that they learned to listen carefully and to give positive feedback. Through the PBAT presentations, students develop skills and knowledge necessary to articulate in-depth knowledge and personal reflections about a given topic. In order to align the professional development of teachers and the academic, social, and emotional needs of students, the principal hired the services of the Morningside Center to train a few teachers on "Restorative Circle," a process to encourage and practice group communication, relationship-building, empathy, democratic decision-making, conflict resolution and problem-solving. This process is already yielding a safe place in which students can speak and share their emotions. For example, in one advisory class, a student stated she was depressed. Her classmates, in turn, articulated the actions they would take to support her, including checking on the student daily, giving her compliments and making her laugh. The principal has already scheduled 12 additional days of professional development with the Morningside Center staff to reflect and refine teacher practice and curriculum. Another organization that offers teachers customized courses to support the social and emotional needs of students is Outward Bound. Students participate in a retreat or wilderness expedition to reflect on who they are, gain confidence, become familiar with the school's principles while getting to know their peers. Parents stated that their children change for the better after these expeditions and retreats. One parent stated that her son returned feeling positive about himself and school. Students shared that they learn to respect and appreciate their peers and teachers at the retreats. Parents stated that the school places students at the center and that meetings and conversations with parents are about student progress, PBAT presentations, attendance, college support and financial aid. In addition, parent-teacher conferences at the end of each term are also student-led. Through their reflections and share out of the knowledge acquired throughout the term parents see how much their students have

progressed academically and socially. These highly structured cohesive programs and support systems help students adopt effective academic and personal behaviors evident in the improved credit accumulation category of the progress report of a letter grade “D” in the year 2011-2012 to a “B” in the year 2012-2013 in addition to their daily participation, collaboration, work product, and their positive supportive behaviors.

- School leaders and staff consistently communicate high expectations connected to college and career readiness and offer feedback, guidance, and advisement supports that prepare student for the next level (3.4)
  - School leaders, teachers and staff begin to communicate high expectations connected to a path to college when students first arrive at school. For example, during the open house, teachers discuss the school philosophy, core values, student accountability, student support and college preparation. Throughout the year, the highly supportive college advisor communicates, collaborates and offers training to students, parents, and their families on the college process, including the SAT and ACT, financial aid, resume writing, and students’ post-graduation plans. At the end of each term, students are responsible for leading the parent teacher conference, in which they review and present their academic progress to their teachers and parents. During these conferences, parents hear about how their children are progressing academically. Students are required to support claims with evidence and answer questions about their work and progress while reflecting on their academic goals and ways to refine them, if necessary. Through these systems of communication, collaboration, and ownership, students and families have a clear understanding of college expectations and are accountable and empowered to take ownership of student learning.
  - Teachers school-wide post learning targets aligned to PBATs and the CCLS, and expect students to research, analyze, review, refine, present and defend their work with supporting evidence. Students revise essays multiple times and teachers offer feedback for each revision. In Crew, students self-assess against college readiness and PBAT rubrics and conference with their Crew Advisor, who offers feedback and guidance on next steps related to rubrics and personal goals. Through these structures, the school has established a culture that encourages habitual productivity and self-reflection, preparing students for the next level.

## **What the school needs to improve**

- Strengthen the use of ongoing checks for understanding and assessment practices in order to consistently make effective adjustments in response to student learning needs across the vast majority of classrooms (2.2)
  - While the school has implemented the New York Performance Standards Consortium rubric across grades and subjects to assess student performance on indicators, character and learning targets, across classrooms there is inconsistency in the use of the data gathered from these assessments to refine and adjust curricula and instruction. The science department is in the process of refining a rubric by unpacking the language of each indicator. While this team is highly engaged in designing a collective assessment tool, the analysis of student work is absent from these conversations. Across subjects, students engage in the same projects, tasks, and assignments regardless of their individual academic progress, strengths, and academic needs. The inconsistent use of student

data limits the teachers' ability to unpack the learning targets and indicators in order to adjust curricula and instruction.

- Across classrooms, teachers check for understanding through the use of questioning, exit slips, conferencing, circulating the room and PBAT peer revision. Although the latter practice is implemented towards the end of the term or unit, thus limiting early intervention, students still provide and receive feedback on their work and suggestions to strengthen their presentation. In one English class, the teacher team used an item analysis to identify questions that needed revision and support; consequently, they designed a lesson plan that reinforced such skills. However, across classrooms, there was inconsistent teacher practice to use data from checks for understanding, peer review, conferencing, and questioning. The absence of this practice school-wide limits teachers' ability and effectiveness to make the necessary and specific curricular adjustments early in the term so that struggling students can receive timely feedback, additional support while higher performing students receive further extensions and more cognitively engaging tasks.
- Strengthen the process to regularly evaluate and refine curricular practices, quality of teacher-team work, and professional development practices so that teacher learning and instruction are aligned to student learning needs (5.1)
  - Curricula promote in-depth investigation and work towards authentic presentations of learning to real audiences. Teacher practice and routines reinforce rigorous habits, including research, analysis, writing and presentation skills across grades and subjects. However, there is no consistent assessment of the effectiveness of instructional practice as it relates to students' specific learning needs in order to support teachers as they implement strategies and adjust curricula to meet the diverse academic needs of students. Moreover, the feedback to students does not consistently match the specific skills and next actionable step to acquire the learning, thus preventing students from having a clear understanding as to how to improve and make academic progress. The limited opportunities for evaluation prevent the school from responding to students' specific academic needs and expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS).
  - English teachers meet in their team to look at student work using a protocol. Together they identify strategies to support student learning. The science department meets to assess the PBAT rubric so that they can support students and enhance assessment tools. While these practices are yielding positive results around professional collaboration and teacher practice, school leaders are still in the early stage of evaluating this work, thus there are limited opportunities to help teachers reflect, assess their work, and provide valuable feedback in order to maximize the time and effort of teams. This limited impact on teacher team meetings has resulted in teachers being ill equipped to effectively identify strategies and practices to support individual students master the CCLS.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: James Baldwin School, The: A School for Expeditionary Learning	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score			X	

### Instructional Core

To what extent does the school regularly...	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

To what extent does the school...	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

To what extent does the school...	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

<b>UD</b>	Underdeveloped	<b>D</b>	Developing	<b>P</b>	Proficient	<b>WD</b>	Well Developed
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