



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**J.H.S. 088 Peter Rouget**

**Middle School K088**

**544 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11215**

**Principal: Ailene Altman Mitchell**

**Date of review: May 11, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Anita Skop**

## The School Context

J.H.S. 088 Peter Rouget is a middle school with 1,247 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 11% Black, 60% Hispanic, 11% White, and 17% Asian students. The student body includes 14% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 94.0%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
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	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
---------------------------	---------------------	----------------	-----------------------

### Findings

At the school, across a vast majority of classrooms student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking, participation and ownership. Teaching practices strategically provide multiple entry points and high-quality supports and extensions into the curricula.

### Impact

All learners, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in student work products.

### Supporting Evidence

- All learners, including students in the NYS Alternate Assessment class, received individualized scaffolds and challenges. Paraprofessionals were routinely instructionally engaged with students. Students were consistently seen to be using checklists, refer-to charts and a variety of text levels of poetry. Further, accountable talk options such as pop-up debate and structured turn and talk using current cross-content vocabulary to raise levels of learning with appropriate supports were evidenced. Student writing was authentic and students used an explicit rubric to guide their writing towards meeting or exceeding standards. Students had to back up their choice or their claim with evidence from the text. The consistency of rigor in classrooms was evidence of all teachers' accountability.
- All students, including ELLs and students with disabilities, had to articulate what they were learning, why they were learning it and how they will use the learning beyond the classroom. In one class, students could explain their rationale for their poem choice and clearly understood the poem's meaning through subject and tone. Students rotated through learning stations, learning a different skill at each, and assessing their learning at each station. Students know that the Teaching Point is both the learning focus and an assessment of Common Core-aligned skill mastery.
- Teachers create websites for flipped classrooms that allows students to conduct research and access the content in multiple ways, including audio, video, visuals and leveled texts, before class to effectively engage in the lesson content so that more time is spent on inquiry and group tasks. Literacy teachers in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade introduced ThinkCERCA (Claims, Evidence, Reasoning, Counterarguments, and Audience) to provide differentiated writing instruction with leveled texts centered on a common guiding question.

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-----------------------

### Finding

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core and content standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized in curricula and academic tasks, and are embedded in a coherent way across grades and subjects.

### Impact

The coherence across grades and subject areas promotes college and career readiness for all students. However, in some cases, there are missed opportunities to expand on student learning projects to increase student ownership.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers have collaboratively enhanced the Common Core-aligned curriculum maps based on students' state assessment results and baseline assessments. The literacy curriculum map incorporated Writing Matters units and Teachers College Reading and Writing Project classroom protocols as teachers noted the need to customize Teachers College Reading and Writing Project to all learners, especially English language learners and students with disabilities. The math curriculum was designed using the Connected Mathematics Project 3 and EngageNY math tasks and assessments.
- The literacy and content area curriculum maps have been enhanced by the Middle School Quality Initiative with the nationally-normed Degrees of Reading Power reading assessment as a baseline and growth measure of student reading comprehension. Middle School Quality Initiative-supported interventions include Wilson Just Words for decoding, Word Generation to accelerate academic language use across the content areas of literacy, science, social studies and math, reciprocal teaching in social studies and science, debate protocols across content subjects of literacy, science, social studies and math, and art as text in the visual arts classes. All content area curricular units come together around an essential question and common student learning outcomes for Integrated Project Work twice a year. This increases coherency across content area and extends integration of higher-order thinking skills to all subjects through a common essential question.
- Teachers identify Common Core-aligned skills and learning activities based on Hess' Cognitive Rigor Matrix applying Webb's Depth of Knowledge, and the commitment to a strong curriculum for all is reinforced by individualized supports and technology as a scaffolding tool. The school affords students the opportunity to delve deeply into a self-selected project two times a year during Independent Project Weeks. However, a limited time frame for additional integrated cross-curricular units of study results in missed opportunities to further develop student ownership of learning in additional content.
- Curricula across subjects engage students in habit- and skill-building tasks such as identifying a theme and following its development in a literary text or gathering data on the minerals and other content in water collected along the Brooklyn Bridge Park.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-----------------------

### Findings

The school uses teacher-created common assessments aligned to the Common Core to track progress and inform curricular and instructional decisions. All teachers use rubrics, and teaching practices consistently reflect the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

### Impact

As a result, there is a clear picture of student progress toward goals across grades and subjects and teachers consistently make effective adjustments to meet all students' learning needs. Students demonstrate increased mastery and they are aware of their next learning steps.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers identified and created Common Core-aligned assessments for the whole grade in literacy for reading and writing, math, science and social studies. After the universal Degrees of Reading Power reading assessment, the Word Identification and Spelling Test or running record is administered to identify the true cause of a students' reading deficiency. As a result teachers are able to see the effect of teaching strategies and the learning needs of students across classrooms in a grade and across grades to co-plan instruction effectively to provide access to the curriculum for all students.
- Teachers use MasteryConnect and the Degrees of Reading Power assessment tools to get real-time data on student learning which can be used to study student learning trends, student learning needs and re-plan instruction in the moment in class. Checks for understanding were seen in the majority of classrooms. Teachers have current feedback on students and are able to tailor teaching to specific skills that individual students need to learn and teaching strategies such as higher-order questioning and discussion protocols to enhance student learning.
- The school's network supported the launch of MasteryConnect in September 2014. After teachers saw the accuracy of alignment to standards and student learning in the math department, all teachers trained in MasteryConnect and now use the real-time data from pre and post unit assessments as well as formative assessments to set up vertical and interdisciplinary teacher team conversations of student mastery of standards. This has created common language among teachers and use of common assessments for all learners to track student learning at a granular level. ThinkCERCA has built-in assessments that provide literacy teachers with real-time feedback to guide students in improving their writing.
- Teachers collaboratively assess how students progress by grade and class and utilize this assessment data to drive their instruction, supporting grouping, shared practices and the development of nuanced strategies that meet student needs. For example, the entire sixth grade math department regrouped their students by need and then streamed them to teachers well-versed in addressing their specific concern.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-----------------------

### Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide training. All 13 teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students.

### Impact

As a result, there is a system of mutual accountability and students are prepared for high school and beyond.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school was one of the first Learning Partners Host schools to mentor two schools in Staten Island and Queens, respectively, in best practices to build teacher capacity and raise student achievement. The school is now one of the first Learning Partners Plus Host School with a Master Principal. This is recognition of the high expectations of the leader herself, the cabinet, teachers, staff and students and that all students are capable of success through empowering teacher teams to adjust units of study and teaching strategies to raise student achievement for all learners. The school successfully provides teachers initial and ongoing training in personalized learning in and beyond the classroom with tools such as ThinkCERCA, Discovery Education, MasteryConnect and School of One. Supportive partnerships with built-in professional development enhance student-centered learning with experiences such as Design Thinking, biomimicry, Gowanus Conservancy Project and the Billion Oysters Project.
- The school celebrates all students with a Core Values Night, Curriculum Night and through Kids at Hope which connects every student with a caring adult to support their success at school. Students spoke about the connection to adults, both their teachers as instructors and caring adults throughout the school who look out for their well-being. Students have a voice through Principal's Council and developed their school mascot to reflect the student body and student beliefs, which is that all students are learners and have a voice. Students spoke about Integrated Project Week and how it showcases their best learning, because they work across a larger variety of stations and have the support of several teachers to improve their project and enhance their learning to connect with a need in the local community.
- All students, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, know the academic expectation from the teaching point guiding the lesson, to rubrics in all classes and content areas stating clearly the criteria needed to achieve and exceed standards. Transparent assessment data such as in-class checks for understanding using hand gestures as well as MasteryConnect results of SchoolNet and Degrees of Reading Power assessments are coupled with teaching conferences to inform stakeholders on student progress and what goals they can set in the upcoming learning cycle. Teachers work collaboratively with special education teachers and English as a second language teachers to incorporate appropriate and effective scaffolds such as native language support, visuals, graphic organizers and leveled texts around the same guiding question.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
---------------------------	---	----------------	-----------------------

**Findings**

Teacher teams systematically analyze key elements of teacher work including classroom practice, assessment data, and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused. Distributed leadership structures are embedded in collaborative teacher teams.

**Impact**

Consistent, high-caliber, collaborative teacher analysis of student work and student assessments results in shared improvements in teacher practice and mastery of goals aligned to the Common Core for subgroups of students. Teacher leadership is effective and teachers play an integral role in key decisions with the principal that affect student learning across the school.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The collaborative strength of the teacher teams has allowed the school to grow a science coach, a math coach, three model teachers, a lead teacher and literacy grade-level teacher facilitators in-house. The math coach, science coach, model teacher and lead teachers all have set up lab sites for highly effective classroom practice and to foster discussions around teaching and learning. Further, comparing the teacher evaluations using the Danielson Framework to the outcomes of students on school-wide assessments indicates that there is a consistent correlation across the school.
- New teachers are supported by the principal and assistant principals with monthly New Teacher Meetings to address current relevant first year teacher topics and administrative issues. The principal has an open door policy and new teachers are encouraged to come to the principal and assistant principals with any questions or instructional requests.
- The impact of distributive leadership is that it has led to buy-in into school goals for instructional focus and teaching and learning school-wide. Teachers facilitate and impact the practices of the school because the principal has given them the “License to Lead” and the tools with which to do it. Administration makes sure that planning is adjusted as needed and assessing to re-engineer by teacher teams. The real assessment of team success is best practices developed in an authentic organic way.
- Collaboration and the work of teacher teams has resulted in the increased effectiveness of teacher practice, especially in the areas of level 3 and 4 question stems and Socratic circles and debate protocols for student-led discussions.