



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**James Weldon Johnson**

**Elementary – Middle School M057**

**176 East 115<sup>th</sup> Street  
Manhattan  
NY 10029**

**Principal: Lorraine Hasty**

**Date of review: May 11, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Jo Ann Benoit**

## The School Context

James Weldon Johnson is an elementary - middle school with 856 students from grade pre-K through grade 8. The school population comprises 26% Black, 68% Hispanic, 2% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 27% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 92.1%.

## 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>Additional Findings</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>Focus</b>	<b>Proficient</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>Proficient</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>Celebration</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>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

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

School leaders and staff established a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all. Structures and systems provide support and feedback to teachers, students and families to meet and understand the expectations around college and career.

### Impact

The development of a culture for learning has resulted in mutual accountability for high expectations and successful partnerships with families to support student progress towards those expectations and ensure students are prepared for the next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- High expectations are shared with staff, students and families. The administration uses the staff handbook, the weekly newsletter entitled “Weekly Informer” and other ways to communicate these high expectations to staff. Staff members are supported by ongoing feedback from administrators through observations, by peers through intervisitations and team collaborations and by consultants. When teachers attend professional development sessions outside of the school they are expected to turnkey to their colleagues to build capacity. Teachers receive professional development and supports from Urban Advantage (UA), the Math and Science Program (MSP), and through their work with Metropolitan State College.
- The school communicates with parents through a variety of ways: phone calls, emails, flyers, Skedula, Friday Folders that have to be signed by parents, and workshops. Workshops offered help parents understand the expectations for students, their academic progress as well as provide support for them to use with their children. One workshop offered had parents experience the hands-on part of the science exam to give them an idea of what their children are expected to do.
- During the student interview, students spoke about the expectations and the ways they are shared with them. They mentioned the Tiger Pledge that they recite every day, Positive Behavioral Intervention Services (PBIS) in the school, the school’s motto “teamwork: all for one”. Students reflect constantly on their work, behavior and the support they receive to do well academically and socially. One student said “Teachers help you socially too and help you get over things that happen at home”. Students lead scholar-led conferences for families and participate in publishing parties with their parents. They share both what they do well and what they need to work on during those times. Their progress and achievement is recognized during award ceremonies and student of the month events.

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula and students' work products reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

### Impact

Students are able to demonstrate higher order thinking skills in discussions and work products. However, teaching practices limit students' opportunities to produce work that reflect high levels of ownership.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teaching strategies provide multiple entry points for diverse groups of students and thus access into the curricula for different groups of learners. In a second grade class, students presented facts and questions they developed on different parts of an informational text they read. In a fifth grade integrated co-teaching (ICT) class, students used different graphic organizers to help them prepare their opinion and supporting evidence for a final essay. In addition, students identified as needing additional support worked with a teacher or City Corps member in the class.
- Across classrooms, students used differentiated graphic organizers, additional tools such as sentence stems, transitional words templates, and manipulatives to support their learning. Their work products and discussions reflected high levels of student thinking and participation. In a third grade class, although the teacher kept on reminding the class to use one particular strategy to solve a problem, one student used his own way and exclaimed "That's my own tactic" when the teacher asked him why he didn't do it as directed. In an 8<sup>th</sup> grade class, students engaged in a Socratic Seminar. They had the opportunity to present their points of view, defend them, challenge others', and ask for clarification.
- Although levels of engagement were high, most students' conversations happened with teacher support. When students were working in groups, teachers facilitated those conversations as well stifling opportunities for some students to own their learning.

## Additional Findings

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Well Developed**

### Findings

Rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills are embedded into common core aligned curricula and academic tasks which are refined and used to provide students with access to standards-based work and work that is aligned to the instructional shifts.

### Impact

There is coherence that fosters higher thinking skills and promote college and career readiness for all students across grades and subject areas. Curricula support students demonstrating their thinking and being cognitively engaged.

### Supporting Evidence

- Curricula are aligned to the Common Core, the instructional shifts and the content standards which promote college and career readiness for all. In the fifth grade, teachers tried a grade wide writing project – grade RAFT (R for the role the student will play, A for the audience, F for the format in which they will be writing and T for the topic) with success. The project was around the book “Esperanza Rising”. Students had to study characters and write in the perspective of one of the four characters assigned and in one of four different formats: diary, speech, informational letter or a reflective letter. Moreover, in an eighth grade lesson reviewed, students were asked several questions at different Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels. Students had to use academic vocabulary from their complex text to answer the following questions: DOK 1 “What are some examples of injustice in the novel, other than Tom Robinson?”, DOK 2 “How do other examples of injustice help us better understand the Robinson case?”, DOK 3 “Consider Atticus’ advice to Scout about getting along with others. How does his advice relate to the problem of injustice?”
- Lesson and unit plans are developed to identify standards, essential questions, practices, assessments, as well as modifications to provide access for students. In a seventh grade lesson, students are asked to find the missing value of variables in order to find the missing measures of angles. The teacher planned three different graphic organizers with the same content but with different supports. For example, in some of the graphic organizers, a variable or two was given and in others they were taken away.
- The school has adapted Expeditionary Learning (EL) and Go Math to help bring coherence to the work. It also used student data to make modifications to these curricular resources. The faculty added more opportunities for writing in the EL curriculum because students needed to strengthen their writing skills. In math, students were struggling making the transition between Go Math’s and CMP3’s approaches (between grades 5 and 6) thus the school decided to only implement the Go Math curriculum to offer a common language and supports seamlessly throughout the school.

**Findings**

The school uses common assessments to determine student progress towards goals. Assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding as well as student self- and peer assessment.

**Impact**

Results of common assessments, checks for understanding, self and peer assessments are used to adjust curricula to meet the needs of all learners.

**Supporting Evidence**

- During the student interview, all students said that they self-assess and peer assess. In five of the seven classes visited, students were group assessing or used a checklist to guide their own work. Self-reflection sheets allow students to identify their strengths and weaknesses in the content as well as in their work habits. Stems such as “I am working hard and doing my best”, “I can pay attention more in class” and “I can ask questions when I don’t understand” are embedded in those worksheets. According to the school quality guide, all subgroups did well in last spring’s English Language Arts exam.
- Common assessments such as running records and class data are used to identify students for academic intervention programs. Teachers use grade and class level data that identify the standards and use them to adjust curricula. In the fifth grade, teachers used student data to refine a problem and create additional steps as scaffolds. In seventh grade, the standards identified as needing to be strengthened based on student work are earth revolution, forces and motion.
- Teachers track student work across classrooms with data sheets and use those data to adjust curricula and pedagogy. Some of the adjustments made to the curricula have been to frontload vocabulary for complex texts, focus on tier two words with students, chunk texts, and use/add visuals and manipulatives.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

The majority of teachers meet in structured inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote the achievement of goals and the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Distributive leadership structures are in place at the school.

### **Impact**

These professional collaborations help to strengthen the instructional capacity of teachers and provide them with opportunities make decisions that affect student learning.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers meet weekly in grade team meetings and bi-weekly in vertical planning teams. They also meet on Mondays for professional development sessions and plan around the school's goals and student achievement – ways in which they can help student progress academically in the content areas. In the teacher team observed, teachers were looking at students' work and ways in which they could address the gaps in students' writing abilities. They discussed prompts such as "what they [students] are able to do" and "what do we want them to be able to do." Some of their answers were "find the best evidence to support their claim", "explain clearly" and "have better connections." Some of the suggestions they shared as next instructional steps are to have students highlight evidence in one color and the explanation in another and use sentence starters in the graphic organizers to guide students.
- During teacher teams, teachers construct the agenda collaboratively, they analyze student work to identify grade level trends and then support one another. For example, the sixth grade identified reading comprehension as their focus. As a result, student work shows improvement in that area.
- Teacher lead teams and committees. They also lead the PBIS committee, are part of the School Leadership Team (SLT) and help make decisions that affect student learning. They are grade leaders and part of the school consultation committee. Teachers helped implement the decisions made around curricula to support coherence across grades and subject areas.