



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Jacob Blackwell School**

**Elementary-Middle School Q111**

**37-15 13 Street  
Queens  
NY 11101**

**Principal: Dionne Jaggon**

**Date of review: May 4, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Philip A. Composto**

## The School Context

The Jacob Blackwell School is an elementary school with 331 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 38% Black, 49% Hispanic, 7% White, 5% Asian and 1% other students. The student body includes 18% English language learners and 29% 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 88.0%.

## 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>Developing</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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Developing</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>Developing</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>Proficient</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>Developing</b>

## Area of Celebration

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

School leaders communicate high expectations to staff through the Danielson Framework for Teaching and professional learning sessions facilitated by internal staff, off-site workshops and intra-visitations. Family engagement sessions help parents understand their children's academic and socio-emotional growth and communicate expectations connected to college and career readiness.

### Impact

School leaders convey high expectations regarding professionalism and student achievement with the entire school community. This has resulted in a system of accountability for those expectations and supports students toward future academic aspirations.

### Supporting Evidence

- The principal communicates high expectations through instructional focused newsletters and emails to the staff on a weekly basis. Teachers are provided with common preparation periods within their schedules. These structures serve to reinforce the schools' instructional goals and expectations and provide opportunities for teachers to meet and engage in professional conversations on school initiatives. For example, the school renewal team conducts weekly professional development sessions demonstrating the use of technology to incorporate independent reading in all content areas.
- School leaders provide professional learning sessions on the Danielson Framework for Teaching with a focus on lesson planning based on feedback from classroom observations, professional development surveys, Advance data, and suggestions from the school renewal team. The principal holds teachers accountable for the schools' high expectations during individual feedback conferences. Observation reports include a focus on teachers' lesson plans with an emphasis on the use of explicit modeling and assessment strategies.
- Parents learn about the schools high expectations through monthly calendars, weekly emails and workshops conducted by the parent coordinator related to college and career readiness. They participate in workshops that provide information on topics such as cyber bullying, safety, immigration and preventing summer learning loss. Parents are engaged in school wide events such as the science fair, family night and the book of the month club.
- Teachers create newsletters and add daily updates to the school website regarding homework to inform parents and provide supports to improve student outcomes. During interviews, parents stated that teachers email and call whenever there is a concern. They further stated, "Students have the opportunity to attend the Bell afterschool program and Saturday academic academy." In addition, the school initiated a student government to provide students with a voice.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Developing**

### Findings

School leaders and faculty have procedures in place to align curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Lessons and academic tasks inconsistently emphasize rigor and higher order thinking skills.

### Impact

The school curricula are in the developing stages of fostering college and career readiness and rigor to leverage coherence across grades and subject areas.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school uses Ready Gen, Teachers College Writing Program, Code X, and Go Math to support English language arts and math instruction. Hands on science activities and the social scope and sequence are used to plan lessons aligned to the common core standards. We observed lesson plans that included the learning objective that consists of a skill and strategy to meet the needs of all students. For example, scholars will be able to identify reasons to support opinions using a compare and contrast chart as per class discussion.
- Under the guidance of the new principal, teachers are beginning to create academic lessons that emphasize rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills within their lesson plans. Lesson plans incorporate the interactive use of smart boards, questions that promote discussions and activities to cognitively engage students. These plans include strategic grouping of students, hands-on activities and pre-planned questions that use an array of Webb's depth of knowledge levels. For example, in one mathematics lesson plan the teacher included fraction bars and counters for students to find fractional parts of a group. The guiding questions planned included, "How is each group alike? Why were the counters divided into three groups? Explain why you count the number of counters in just one of the groups in exercise one." However, not all lessons demonstrated this level of rigor and higher order thinking.
- During grade level common planning sessions, teachers are in the process of aligning the curriculum to the common core learning standards and creating formative assessments. Although lesson plans outlined essential questions, learning objectives, vocabulary and learning activities, curricular decisions to build coherence across grades and subjects are in the emerging stages.

## Additional Findings

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

Across classrooms, teaching strategies that include class discussions, entry points and engagement in challenging tasks to increase student participation to enhance the level of student thinking is inconsistent.

### Impact

The display of higher order thinking skills and high levels of participation from students are transpiring in their implementation and production of meaningful student work products.

### Supporting Evidence

- In some classes visited students were using manipulatives such as colored disks, base ten blocks and cubes during math lessons. Visual supports such as word walls, graphic organizers and strategy charts were available as references for student use during some English language arts (ELA) lessons. In various classrooms student portfolios for English language learners included scaffolds such as, sentence starters, list of vocabulary words, and picture clues. However, the uses of such supports were inconsistent across classrooms. For example, during a math lesson students in one classroom were using colored discs while in another classroom students struggled to two digit numbers without manipulatives. During an ELA lesson, students were asked to compare and contrast and were not provided explicit next steps or an anchor chart.
- Lessons did not provide multiple entry points for all learners, especially for English language learners and students with disabilities. For example, in one math class observed students struggled with the task and were not provided supports such as manipulatives.
- Student participation and discussion at high levels was inconsistent across classrooms. In three of the seven classrooms visited although students were asked to engage in discussion, not all students participated and students' discussions were not accountable. Although teachers circulated, there was no strategic "listening in" or conferencing with groups to ensure student participation and discussions were at or guided to high levels. For example, in one classroom students were asked to turn and talk. In three groups there were four students that were not participating and one group was not discussing the focus question, "Why was the tree happy to see the boy? Did her feelings change?"

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### **Findings**

The schools use of common assessments to measure student progress towards goals and to adjust curricula and instruction is inconsistent across grades and subjects. Assessment practices are uneven in the use of ongoing checks for understanding, peer assessments and student self-assessments across the school.

### **Impact**

The staff is at the beginning stages of using common assessment results and ongoing checks for understanding to make effective instructional adjustments to lessons to maximize the learning potential of all students.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- In some classrooms students worked independently while teachers provided support to small target groups. A review of the graphic organizer that students were completing independently indicated that students were unclear about how to use a graphic organizer to compare and contrast. Teachers in several classrooms did not circulate to the students working independently to check for their understanding in order to make the necessary adjustments to meet their needs.
- Adjustments based on common assessments such as running records, unit tests, exit slips, checklists and writing rubrics to address varying levels of language proficiency of English language learners were evident in some of the lessons observed. Although the data for English language learners indicated that students spoke different languages and were at different levels of English proficiency, lessons for English language learners during push-in periods in math and English language arts by the English as a Second Language teacher did not reflect sufficient adjustments to curricula or instruction to meet the needs of these students. For example, in a math class the English as a Second Language teacher did not provide any differentiated learning supports for English language learners.
- In seven classrooms visited we did not observe student self or peer assessment practices. Rubrics were posted on student writing projects that were displayed and in portfolios that contained feedback in the form of “next steps”. However, students’ work was not always provided with comments that aligned to the rubric and next steps were not always clear, concise or actionable for students. For example, in a second grade classroom feedback was written in script and did not contain student-friendly language.
- In one classroom the teacher said, “Give yourself a check if you solved the problem correctly.” The teacher did not circulate or collect the “Do Now” to check for student understanding of the math concept which prevented the teacher from identifying students requiring a re-teach and students requiring enrichment.

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

The majority of teachers engage in structural inquiry-based collaborations to support curricula alignment across grades and examine student work and assessment data; however, teams do not focus on subgroups including students with disabilities English-language learners and other high-need subgroups. Distributive leadership structures are developing to support capacity building.

### Impact

The school's professional collaborations foster teacher reflection and promote shared leadership. Identifying effective instructional strategies that focus on improving student outcomes and promote the schools' goals is developing across the teams.

### Supporting Evidence

- During a team meeting, teachers explained that they selected students with different lenses. For example, one teacher selected students that were high 2's another selected students in the lowest-one-third, another teacher selected an English language learner that was struggling and another teacher selected a student with a disability. Due to the fact that there was no common focus it was difficult for the team to identify a common strategy that would increase student outcomes.
- The school renewal team has worked to develop teacher leaders and identified specific areas to build capacity with teachers. For example, teacher leaders have identified development of higher order questioning, the use of experience charts and ways to conduct formative assessments. However, since this work is in the beginning stages results in improved teacher practice and progress towards student achievement is not yet evident.
- The majority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations. Teacher teams meet on Tuesdays during the professional work time and during common planning sessions. During inquiry team sessions teachers work together to plan lessons aligned to the common core learning standards. Teacher teams engage in data inquiry once a month looking at student writing using a common rubric. These professional collaborations provide teacher teams and administrators an opportunity to discuss student data, plan specific academic social and emotional adjustments to meet students' specific needs. This inquiry approach is just beginning to expand and develop across teams and therefore, is not yet an embedded practice across the school.
- The new principal is fostering distributive leadership practices that are beginning to be embraced by the school community. Select staff members have been selected to play integral roles in key decisions that impact student learning. For example, staff member chair various committees such as Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS). In addition, For example, the guidance counselor and teacher leaders presented a PBIS interactive workshop to teachers on using appropriate positive language when speaking with students to engage and motivate students, while deescalating behavioral issues. As a result, there are fewer student removals and an increase of 1.5% in attendance.