



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Jordan L. Mott

Middle School X022

**270 East 167th Street
Bronx
NY 10456**

Principal: Edgar Lin

**Date of review: May 8, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Leticia Rodriguez-Rosario**

The School Context

The Jordan L. Mott School is a middle school with 684 students from grade six through grade eight. The school population comprises 29% Black, 69% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 33% English language learners and 23% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 88.9%.

School Quality Criteria

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

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	---	----------------	-------------------

Findings

Teachers are engaged in structured inquiry based professional collaborations that support the integration of the Common Core Learning Standards and school goals. Teams consistently review student work and or data.

Impact

Embedded structures and systems increase teachers' ability to work together in teams to improve teacher practice and accelerate students' progress toward goals.

Supporting Evidence

- During teacher team meetings, teachers follow a practice of “We tried, We found, and We will steal”. Teachers rotate through the cycle explaining what they “tried” in a lesson, what they “found” that worked or did not work well, and then write down ideas from their peers that they want to “steal” for their own class. After their reflection, they pair off and share details on the strategies they want to “steal”. During a cycle the team decided that a shortened period of time for conducting this rotation was more effective than the extended time they usually have. They decided to continue with the shortened time so they can squeeze even more activities into their meeting time. Items shared by team members included anchor charts and graphic organizers with sentence frames showing students' progress in writing.
- In looking at student data, teacher teams use a protocol where they complete a sheet that has three columns; the first column describes the data, in the next they interpret the data, and in the last column they look at the implications for teaching, as informed by learning goals linked to the Common Core Learning Standards. For example, in looking at data for a sixth grade class the teacher wrote the following in the first column of the sheet: “Students seemed to score the lowest on the first section of the assessment (organizing and presenting data, plotting and labeling etc.)”. In the next column the teacher wrote, “Students had difficulty organizing their data, setting up the graph and plotting points on a graph.” The third column read as follows, “Do more read alouds and shared reading.” “Annotate daily etc...” “Get info/meaning from text...”
- In both of the teacher team meetings observed, the teachers who were interviewed shared how the work in teacher teams improves their practice. For example a teacher stated, “We are critical friends.” Another teacher shared, “There is overall support, *Open Door*, I do not feel unwelcome in anyone's room.”

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms teachers are beginning to align teaching practices to reflect the school's beliefs about how students learn. Teaching strategies inconsistently provide entry points for all learners.

Impact

Teaching practices lead to uneven engagement in challenging tasks and uneven demonstration of higher order thinking skills.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers' efforts to provide students with opportunities to interact with text via discussions did not consistently yield high levels of student engagement in learning. For example, in a science class focused on measurement, students' attention ebbed and flowed even though the lesson provided a hands-on experience. By contrast, in a sixth grade literacy class students engaged in a discussion based on an incident of violence in Baltimore. Students were able to remain focused on the topic. One student said, "I think they wanted something." The second student responded, "I agree, people protest like back in the day." All students were engaged throughout the instructional time in this class.
- Tasks and groupings for instruction do not consistently meet the needs of all students. For example, in an eighth grade social studies class, students sat in groups at tables as the teacher moved from table to table checking on student progress through the reading. All students had the same worksheet on different artists from the Great Depression, including Margaret Mitchell, Duke Ellington and Jesse Owens, along with a paragraph on "escapism". Questions were at the Depth of Knowledge level 1 and included prompts such as, "Define escapism" and "Escapism helped people _____ during the _____." Students then moved on to either create a poster, skit, or write a letter from the perspective of a person during the Great Depression. The students at the back table and side table were disengaged and spent the time discussing topics that were off task.
- In some classrooms, the teachers were able to provide all students with scaffolds that allowed them to engage with the lesson. In a seventh grade literacy class students were in two groups as the Integrated Co Teaching teachers and two para-professionals used parallel teaching to help them answer the essential question, "What keys did Frederick Douglass acquire to help him survive and escape slavery?" Students worked to gather information about Frederick Douglass to write an argumentative essay. They had differentiated materials for writing a thesis statement and posed and answered Depth of Knowledge questions (level 2 and 3). For example, they used accountable talk stems to answer the question, "How can you have safety if you are a slave?" One student stated, "I disagree with him because how could you be safe if you are a slave? In another group students began working on their thesis statements as their exit tickets. All students were engaged. This pattern of supports was not noted across classrooms visited.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

The school's curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and reflect the instructional shifts. In alignment to the school's theme of constructing meaning across content areas, tasks are designed to promote higher order thinking by all students.

Impact

Common Core aligned tasks across content areas and grades consistently offer all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, opportunities to think and write critically as they work towards college and career readiness goals.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses *Expeditionary Learning* for literacy and *CMP3* for math. *Engage NY* is incorporated into both programs to ensure coherence across grades and subjects. Teacher's College writing units have also been incorporated into the literacy units. The NYC Scope and sequence are used for science and social studies. Pacing calendars and units of study have been refined and adjusted to ensure that identified essential standards are taught. According to the principal, the goal is to move away from "coverage" and head to "mastery" of said standards.
- Although there are differences in the components of lesson plans reviewed, there is consistent evidence of planning for the delivery of coherent instruction. Lesson plans showed elements such as scripted questions with Depth of knowledge levels, formative assessment questions and exit ticket questions. One plan delineated the differentiation of process, instruction and product, with students required to complete four, five, or six paragraphs, while another listed names of students who would receive a tiered activity.
- Tasks require students to consistently analyze and think critically and lesson plans take students through close reading strategies, discussions, and then to writing focused on an essential question. For example in a seventh grade literacy unit, teachers planned lessons around the recent riots in Baltimore. Students were asked to analyze sources, compare information to a previous lesson on Fredrick Douglass, and then answer the essential question, "Is violence necessary to achieve peace in the Baltimore Riots?"

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

The school leader is supporting teachers in the development of rubrics, assessments and a grading policy that are aligned to the school's curricula and the Common Core Learning Standards. The school is developing in its use of common assessments to inform instruction.

Impact

The use of common assessments to provide data on student progress is beginning to inform teacher sharing of actionable feedback to students and adjustments to curriculum and instruction to improve student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has identified student performance measurement tools which include, but are not limited to, the New York State English Language Arts assessment, the New York State Mathematics assessment, the New York State eighth grade science assessment, and the New York State assessment for English Language Learners. They also use the Degrees of Reading Power assessment to monitor students' reading progress every four to six weeks.
- Teacher teams are in the process of creating and fine tuning Common Core aligned rubrics, performance task assessments, as well as baseline, benchmark and other progress monitoring assessments. The data generated will be used to differentiate instruction in order to provide entry points for all students, including students with disabilities, and English language learners. The school is also working to develop a school wide grading policy.
- Some students receive teacher feedback on their work, in the form of comments called "Glows" and "Grows". For example, a student received the following feedback based on a monologue performance rubric, "Glow: You selected a very challenging monologue and were able to use emphasis and tone to tell a clear story." The "Grow" was, "Make sure your movements help to tell the story as well and are different. Making circles with your arms grabs attention, but does not express Romeo's love for Juliet." High level actionable feedback such as this was not consistently evident across grades and subject areas.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Developing
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

School leaders set and communicate high expectations to the entire staff and are fine tuning accountability systems. The school is beginning to consistently communicate with parents, informing them of expectations for their children and ways that they can help.

Impact

School leaders communicate high expectations to staff in alignment to schoolwide goals. The school is beginning to communicate college and career readiness expectations to families and support them towards helping their children meet the expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leader communicates high expectations to the staff, through the school's "Fundamental Instructional Elements" that are aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. An excerpt from a school document informs staff that, "Domain 1: High level learning occurs when we plan and... are derived from the Common Core Learning standards, Domain 2: High Level learning happens when our learning environments have... Posted student work within the current unit with actionable feedback, and Domain 3: High level learning occurs when... There is daily written evidence of student progress toward the learning objective." Daily announcements and frequent observation cycles are also used to communicate and hold all staff members accountable for high expectations.
- Using tools such as a Community Handbook, newsletters (like the '6th Grader'), Career Day and special family events, the school communicates high expectations for student learning, including expectations for all students to be Responsible, Organized, Respectful and Safe (RORS). Parents attended events such as "Welcome Parents, Family Game Night", and "High School Transition Orientation". However, some parents stated that the school does not provide consistent feedback to families regarding students' progress towards college and career readiness goals and expectations.
- The school's professional development plan is aligned to the school's goal of "meaning making" by all students and the Danielson Framework for Teaching, to support all staff in making progress towards meeting high expectations for instruction. For example, in October and November there was professional development on, "Read around the text" and the Frayer Model. In December, January and February the professional development focused on annotating/coding and shared/guided reading, to help teachers build their capacity to meet instructional expectations.