



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning**

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

J.H.S. 062 Ditmas

Middle School K062

**700 Cortelyou Road
Brooklyn
NY 11218**

Principal: Barry Kevorkian

**Date of review: March 29, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Michele Ashley**

The School Context

J.H.S. 062 Ditmas is a middle school with 1,192 students from grade 6 through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 31% Asian, 24% Black, 31% Hispanic, and 13% White students. The student body includes 22% English Language Learners and 18% students with disabilities. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 95.3%.

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 <i>Framework for Teaching</i> , aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	Focus	Proficient
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	Proficient
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	Proficient
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
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Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations. Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share.

Impact

Collaboration has strengthened the instructional capacity of teachers and results in progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers on each grade level conduct inquiry meetings during common planning periods once per week. Inquiry meetings have a preset agenda, focus on targeted students, and the team leader records minutes and tasks. Agendas include a review of students' successes, improvements needed, goals met, and projected class or grade level implementation of strategies for the upcoming week. Grade 6 inquiry notes list successes as, "Students are noticing other students' weaknesses in writing evidence and topic sentences." Notes also list scaffolds and supports implemented including "Using topic sentences and practicing finding textual evidence across curricula for students with disabilities and English as a New language (ENL)."
- Teachers shared that they have improved their individual practice through participating on a grade team through the sharing and piloting of new practices across content areas. One teacher shared that team members are able to try different strategies for target students simultaneously and then report back which strategies are having the greatest impact. Once the team agrees upon which strategies work best for those students, the most effective strategies are implemented across content areas.
- Teams analyze student work and have begun to analyze their own practices. During the grade 8 meeting teachers from each content area presented the strategies being implemented with target students. One teacher stated that students were not demonstrating comprehension of the definition of vocabulary words in their sentences. She shared samples of the student sentences and the team decided that the students need a more intense level of support. Via the SMARTboard, teachers consulted the Goalbook application, an online resource for intervention strategies. They discussed the use of sentence frames, sentence starters, multiple choice, and graphic organizers. The team decided to implement the Frayer Model graphic organizer to support vocabulary comprehension, after a presentation by a teammate. Team members also decided to add lessons on grammar and sentence structure.
- Teachers shared that the strategies implemented have resulted in student progress, such that students have improved in creating topic sentences and using text based evidence to support their claims. Grade 6 team minutes note that students have begun to include citations, and notice when their classmates are missing a topic sentence. Another teacher shared that one of the targeted students who never received above 60%, received 110% on the last math assessment, including the bonus question.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms teaching practices are aligned to the curricula, reflect an articulated set of beliefs, and consistently provide students with multiple entry points to the curriculum. (a/b)

Impact

A lack of coherence and strategic implementation of teaching strategies across the vast majority of classrooms limits all students from being engaged and demonstrating higher-order thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders articulated a set of beliefs around how students learn best which include teachers' preparation of a clearly articulated and well-developed lesson plan, high level questioning and discussion, leveled instruction, and appropriate grouping to facilitate discussion. Leaders also shared a focus on citing text evidence in discussions and writing, English Language Arts Instructional Shifts 4 and 5. To clarify expectations for a well-developed lesson plan school leaders adopted the SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) lesson plan template which identifies the theme, content and language objective, key vocabulary, supplemental materials, and SIOP features. SIOP features include preparation, scaffolding, group options, integration of processes, application and assessment. Five out of seven lesson plans collected adhered to the SIOP model.
- Across classrooms visited teachers displayed content and language objectives and students were thoughtfully assigned to working groups based on performance levels. In a social studies classroom students were assigned to groups of four and worked together to review historical documents and look for textual evidence. One student read an excerpt from the text and explained the meaning to his classmates, "What this means is, Whites had more advantages than Blacks so they fought using a peaceful protest. They didn't like that so they implemented apartheid." However, this level of engagement and opportunity for students to demonstrate their thinking was not evidenced in all classrooms visited.
- In a grade 6 classroom the teacher adjusted the level of support to meet students' needs. Five groups were required to find three pieces of evidence to support the background, problem, and solution to South African Genocide. Two groups were required to find two pieces of evidence and were provided with vocabulary definitions and supporting questions for each prompt. All students were able to engage in the activity and had opportunities to share their thinking.
- In a math classroom the teacher assigned students to three different groups based on performance levels. One group worked with the teacher, one worked independently, and one group worked on individual computers using the IXL math program. Although students were thoughtfully assigned to working groups based on performance levels, there was minimal opportunity for students in the independent group and teacher led group to share or demonstrate their thinking. The teacher led group was teacher directed and close-ended questioning did not allow students to share their thinking. The teacher asked, "If angle 3 is 150 degrees, what does 4 have to be?" The independent group worked on the same math sheet but did not engage in discussion or share their process with the group.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using data and student work.

Impact

Purposeful decisions build coherence across grades and content areas and provide access to the curriculum for a diversity of learners.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty utilize Common Core aligned curricula in all subject areas, *Scholastic Code X* for English Language Arts (ELA), *CMP3* for math, and the *New York City Scope and Sequence* for science and social studies. After a review of the projected student performance levels in science, school leaders and faculty developed new curriculum maps for grade 6 science and pacing calendars for grades 7 and 8 to ensure that all science standards would be taught with fidelity across the grades. Maps and pacing calendars are complete for September 2015 through May 2016.
- Across content areas, lesson plans collected show evidence of incorporating the shifts. For ELA, informational and literary text, text-based answers, writing from sources, and academic vocabulary. In math included are application of knowledge, and practicing for understanding of math concepts. Furthermore, across lessons teachers' planning includes introducing content vocabulary. An ELA lesson that requires students to evaluate a performance task using a rubric includes plans to introduce the words coherence, conventions, and relevant. A social studies lesson on genocide includes the introduction of the words classification, symbolism, dehumanization, organization, polarization, extermination and denial. A math lesson plan for students to enhance understanding of populations and random samples includes applying their learning from conducting an investigation of a random sampling of starburst candies.
- Based on a projection of not meeting Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) in science the school conducted an inquiry of science data and science lessons in 2014-2015. The school determined that teachers were teaching to their strengths and all standards were not being taught. Based on this data grade 6 teachers created new curriculum maps that include key ideas, essential questions, New York State science standards, resources, activities, reading strategies, math strategies, and assessments. Refinements to the science curriculum are made based on student data as teachers progress through the year and include key vocabulary and differentiated instruction for groups of students.
- Across content areas teachers refine lessons to include plans for scaffolds, small group instruction, differentiated tasks, and tools. An ELA lesson includes plans for leveled questions and supports for English Language Learners (ELLs) and a tier 2 group. Plans include the redirection of students to leveled prompt questions, chunking text, and a review of difficult vocabulary. A math lesson includes plans to provide math formulas and examples to students who struggle. According to the lesson selected students will also be given a word bank with key vocabulary.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers use common assessments to determine student progress toward goals. Across classrooms assessment practices reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact

Teachers make data informed adjustments to curricula to meet students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers administer benchmark assessments in ELA and math in the fall and spring for grades 6, 7, and 8. Pre- assessments, end-of-unit assessments, and performance tasks, are administered across content areas. Data from these assessments is used to determine individual and grade level progress toward goals. A review of reading and writing performance data revealed that students across grades struggled with persuasive essays and inference. School leaders and teachers identified these as areas of focus across content areas. Teachers across content areas agreed to incorporate inference and persuasive writing into their lessons. A social studies lesson states, "Students will define population, random sample, and frequency and discuss inferences about a population based on data from a random sample."
- Teachers also use online assessments tools, *Achieve 3000*, (ELA and ELL support), and *IXL*, (math), to provide additional data on student progress. The online tools monitor student progress on targeted skills and provide school leaders and teachers with individual, class, grade, and school reports. The online tools also suggest learning objectives for individual students such as a reading performance report that includes a learning goal for a grade 8 student, "The learner will use context to understand vocabulary in a tenth grade fictional passage." A math individual performance report summarizes the skills mastered and in need of improvement. Additionally, teachers use assessment data to plan small group instruction, student work groups, reteaching strategies and instructional supports. A grade 7 lesson plan states, "Students are grouped by recent performance ...In each group of three students, there is a student from each of the three performance tiers."
- Across classrooms visited teachers used questioning to check for understanding, push student thinking, and engage students in the tasks. In an ELA classroom the teacher pushed students to clarify their feedback on a performance assessment and make their statements succinct. The teacher asked students several questions that led them to refine their feedback and explain the importance of identifying the setting. The teacher asked students to think about the plot and how the setting is impacting the plot and the characters. After discussing with peers one student responded, "Since it is set in the school, they have to be there. If it was a different setting there would be no bully. Students can't leave. There is no escape from the bully." Students in the group added feedback regarding the setting to their peer assessment.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations and provide training to the entire staff. School leaders and staff provide ongoing feedback to families regarding their children’s progress toward goals.

Impact

Systems are in place to hold staff accountable for expectations and help families understand student progress.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate high expectations to staff via monthly faculty conferences, academy and leadership meetings, weekly cabinet meetings, and instructional team meetings six times a year. The school is organized into three academies and school leaders send a weekly email, “Update and The Week at a Glance,” to each teacher within each of the learning academies, Six Grade Exploratory, Academic, Performing and Visual Arts (APVA) and The Institute for Law and Community Service. Updates contain feedback, important information and dates for the specific academy. A grade 6 update includes information on new admits, promotion in doubt, college and career ready activities, i-log parent communication, and report card requirements. It states, “All teachers have chosen colleges/universities. Please be sure to research your school with your class.” An APVA update states, “There is no official 3rd quarter progress report. However, teacher teams should collaborate to create their own progress report to send home to parents.”
- School leaders provide training to support curriculum development and the instructional focus on lesson planning, questioning, and small group instruction. Teachers have received training in the SIOP lesson planning model, the Margarita Calderon Academic Vocabulary for ELLs, and math Blended Learning. Teachers also participate in the Center for Educational Information (CEI) professional learning communities. CEI Teachers participate in professional learning sessions and inter-school visitations centered on enhancing science and ELL instruction.
- Parents interviewed shared that school leadership has an open door policy and they are able to communicate with leadership, teachers, and other staff members as needed. Parents shared that the school communicates via phone calls and face-to-face meetings. All teachers maintain i-logs of parent communication, which include time, date, reason for the call, and parent response. Parents do not need an appointment, school staff accommodates families when they need to speak with a teacher. Parents shared that they receive consistent communication on how their children are progressing academically. One parent shared that teachers reach out to parents early, when they are beginning to see a decrease in performance. She noted, “They short circuit the problem before it can get worse.” (b)
- Parents receive progress reports in-between marking periods that explain their children’s progress. Parents can also access academic information via Engrade and Schoology. Five of the seven parents interviewed use the online access. Teachers have also provided families access codes to utilize IXL at home. Parents received notice in the fall which shared, “We’re happy to announce that we will use IXL to help reinforce our classroom this year. IXL is an online math and language arts program with over 4,000 interactive practice skills, and we’ve created a personal account for your child.”