



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

James Madison High School

High School K425

**3787 Bedford Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11229**

Principal: Jodie Cohen

**Date of review: April 6, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Tracie Benjamin-Van Lierop**

The School Context

James Madison is a high school with 3,289 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 20% Asian, 18% Black, 18% Hispanic, and 44% White students. The student body includes 11% English Language Learners and 14% students with disabilities. Boys account for 58% of the students enrolled and girls account for 42%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 92.2%.

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	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	Celebration	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	Additional Findings	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff, have a system of accountability for those expectations, and provide training. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations and offer ongoing detailed feedback and guidance to students.

Impact

A system of accountability holds staff accountable to meet the school's instructional expectations. Guidance supports prepare students for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers engage in professional development opportunities throughout the school year focused on planning and preparation, classroom environment, and questioning as outlined in the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. After each professional development event, teachers participate in intervisitations and complete reflection sheets connected to a specific Danielson *Framework for Teaching* component writing about how they plan to use their takeaway learning and what specific steps they will take within their daily lesson implementation.
- School faculty partners with representatives from over one hundred colleges to host a college night for students and their families. There are also trips to City colleges and State college presentations, where students tour campuses, meet with college admission advisers, and hear from students currently attending those colleges.
- Students receive guidance on participation in Advanced Placement and honors courses from their guidance counselors and teachers. For example, students who are recommended for advanced level science courses or want to take the class, must complete a course registration form and receive approval from the department assistant principal.
- During the student meeting, students across grades stated, "Our guidance counselors have conversations with us about careers and college and they also recommend us to teachers who can help us with our college essays." Another student commented, "Last semester my English Language Arts teacher brought us to the guidance office to speak with counselors regarding the expectations for a college essay."

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the instructional shifts.

Impact

Across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- The faculty believes students learn best when they are a part of their own learning. The school leadership team is working with teachers to ensure that increased student voice is incorporated in classroom discussions and questioning. The principal explained, “I want the students to know they are leaders and their voices should be heard.” In a science Integrated Co-Teaching class, students discussed natural selection and justified their responses with textual evidence. Additionally, the teacher reminded students to reference their notes from the previous day’s lesson and used an interactive white board to enlarge images to show greater detail of the subject matter to prompt students to engage in discussion.
- During a social studies lesson on Mongolia, the aim asked, “Can a strong leader affect the world?” The students seated in a whole group formation listened to the teacher lecture and responded to teacher-directed, low-level questions such as, “What about the environment of Mongolia was so rough?” and “What do we mean by the term nomads?” A student responded to the latter question and the teacher asked, “Did everyone hear that?” and then responded to back to the student stating, “Excellent” and proceeded with the remainder of the lesson.
- In a tenth grade English Language Arts lesson, where according to school leadership, most of the students are on a fifth grade reading level, students presented their book talks to their peers. One of the student presenters was a student with a disability who was previously in a more restrictive self-contained classroom and had previously struggled with speaking in front of her peers. During the lesson, students asked low-level questions of the presenters such as, “Who is the author?” and “How many pages are in the book?” The teacher attempted to encourage students to ask higher-level questions by stating, “I am hearing a lot of clarifying questions. Are there any questions about the plot or characters?” A student was asked about the purpose of the *Depth of Knowledge* chart posted on the desks in the classroom and remarked, “The chart wasn’t there yesterday but I know we use it in some of my other classrooms for questions.”

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and content standards, and integrate instructional shifts. Written curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills across grades and subjects.

Impact

Purposeful decisions are building coherence in development of rigorous tasks that promote college and career readiness for all students including English Language Learners and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of lesson plans and unit plans indicated that written lesson plans within units include an aim, content objective(s), Common Core Learning Standards, focus and key questions, lesson pre-assessment, a notation of barriers to learning, and planning with Universal Design for Learning. A social studies lesson on communism in China included multiple means of representation to engage students using audio, video, and text. Students were given the choice of which Mao Tse-tung quote to select and were given a choice of developing a presentation either individually or collaboratively with a group.
- In a unit on the theory of evolution, National Science Education Standards were included in addition to New York City science performance standards. Pivotal questions focused on “What is the relationship between the environment and the value of an adaptation?”, “How does this simulation relate to natural selection?”, and “How would you modify the simulation to make it more accurate?” Differentiation included student preference sheets and lesson supplements, teacher scaffolds, and modifications for students with disabilities as needed and as mandated in their Individualized Education Program.
- A math lesson on the law of sines included Common Core Learning Standards and *Depth of Knowledge* (DOK) terms, however, the application and focus of the different DOK levels in the lesson plan was not evident. The plan did outline some aspects of how Universal Design for Learning would be considered such as using a word wall for English Language Learners (ELLs) and guided note taking, however, opportunities for ELLs and students with disabilities to demonstrate their thinking was limited.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are loosely aligned with the school's curricula. Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

There is limited feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Teachers inconsistently make effective adjustments to meet students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of student work evidenced varying levels of teacher feedback to students. For example, one sample of student work from an Advanced Placement ELA class included "Your story is well written and your narrator speaks with an ease that makes your story flow naturally. You also read with such evident enthusiasm that your classmates were drawn in! Work on developing the setting (where your story unfolds) so that your reader gains a deeper understanding of how the time and place influence the actions of the characters." Conversely, on an exam on *Angela's Ashes* by Frank McCourt, a student scored 83 and had feedback that included question mark symbols and the comment "OK."
- Although peer-to-peer feedback was present in some classes, the quality of student feedback to each other as a way for teachers to check for understanding was inconsistent. Some student feedback included "nice job" and "check your spelling." When asked by teachers to turn and talk, students complied, however, there was limited data collection of student responses to check for accuracy and re-visit with students if necessary.
- Additional review of student work from an Advanced Placement class showed that on an economics exam with a score of 67, feedback was in the form of check marks and question mark symbols with limited comments on next steps or areas of focus.
- During an ELA class, the teacher engaged students in a Socratic seminar and attempted to check-in with students to ensure they understood the lesson's focus on civil disobedience by asking questions, some of which were low-level, such as, "Why is refusing to pay your taxes considered civil disobedience?" and "Where did he write the essay?" The teacher also used a Socratic seminar observation checklist to monitor who speaks in the discussion, makes eye contact with other speakers, asks a new or follow-up question, and paraphrases and adds to another speaker's ideas.

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 that promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Distributed leadership structures are in place so that teachers have built leadership capacity.

Impact

The instructional capacity of teachers is being strengthened. Teachers have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet weekly and use a common template to focus discussions, record insights, and areas of concern. A review of teacher team minutes for the ELA team revealed that the team did an analysis of student work focused on feminist theory and *Antigone* by Sophocles. Their major emphasis was to determine how many students understood the concept of feminist theory and were able to analyze the text *Antigone* and identify who is a feminist hero or villain. They used this information to inform their instruction for marking periods two and three when their literary focus was on *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini and *Romeo and Juliet* by Shakespeare.
- Teachers believe their voices matter, are heard, and affect student learning across the school. As a result of a teacher written grant, the school was able to partner with the Roundabout Theater and collaborate with a teaching artist who, according to the ELA teacher who wrote the grant, “has been able to reach all different types of our students who now have access to the arts and can connect to their academics, too.” Another teacher put in a proposal that was approved by administration for a trip to a Newport mansion in Rhode Island as a connection to the lifestyle portrayed in the book, *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald.
- Teachers concurred that teams came together to re-design assessments and student projects to incorporate more student choice in assignments, to include checkpoints at the end of every task segment, and to make determinations when and how to remove scaffolds for their English Language Learner and students with disabilities sub-groups. As a result, the both subgroups have made progress and the school is closing the achievement gap as noted on the School Quality Snapshot.