



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

**James Baldwin School, The: A School for
Expeditionary Learning**

High School M313

**351 West 18th Street
Manhattan
NY 10011**

Principal: Brady Smith

**Date of review: February 23, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Rod Bowen**

The School Context

James Baldwin School, The: A School for Expeditionary Learning is a high school with 266 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 1% Asian, 44% Black, 49% Hispanic, and 5% White students. The student body includes 5% English Language Learners and 19% students with disabilities. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 69.8%.

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	Additional Findings	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	Focus	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
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations that are aligned with the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and provide training to the entire staff. Staff members consistently communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness, and offer on-going feedback on student progress to families.

Impact

Teachers have the training they need to support achievement of high expectations and are held accountable for meeting those expectations. Parents and guardians understand their children's progress toward meeting the school's expectations, which are connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers are expected to be teachers of reading. It is one of the school's Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) goals. The school's Expeditionary Work Plan Goals clearly identify the intended impact as, "Students can become more independent readers. Students can independently research and write high quality Performance Based Assessment Tasks (PBATs) and other products. Students independently incorporate information from complex texts into their PBATs and other products." A sample professional development agenda focused on the facilitation of a close critical reading workshop. In addition, a sample teacher inter-visitation tool noted that students were using close reading organizers for two texts.
- Teachers noted that the online grading and communication system is the most effective means for them to communicate with parents, students and each other. Crew (student) advisors can see comments made by colleagues and communicate them to parents in a streamlined fashion. Information regarding student progress is presented on the website as degrees of mastery within course learning targets. For example, on one student's page, under one of her classes she scored 2.8 out of a possible 3.2 in the learning target: I use scientific vocabulary and evidence to describe a concept.
- Parents all agreed that teachers and crew advisors in particular consistently communicate with them. In addition to the online grading and communication website that parents can access, email, texting, and phone calls are also used as modes of communication based on what is most convenient for individual parents.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Developing

Findings

The school is developing their use of common assessments to measure student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas. Assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

Assessment results are inconsistently used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- In a social studies class, a teacher consistently posed questions geared toward assessing understanding while pushing student thinking. She asked, “What images are standing out to you and why?”, “What do you think of disruption?”, “Is there anyone who doesn’t think disruption is a good idea?” and “Are they going to be successful?” However, such purposeful questions were not consistent across classrooms. In another class, a teacher seemed to check for understanding by asking, “Makes sense? Thumbs up.” She then stated, “I want to see all thumbs up.” Students complied, but the teacher did not confirm their actual understanding.
- Data from a diagnostic assessment was presented, but comparative data for the same students on the same assessment taken earlier in the year was not referenced to illustrate progress or growth over time. A teacher noted, “I’d like to see a comparison from fall to spring, which we’ve never been able to do in my three years here.” Another teacher commented, “We’re trying to use data better to see if kids are ready for PBATS.”
- Teachers spoke of how student outcomes on cumulative assessments and diagnostic tasks resulted in the design of courses and placement of students into specific classes at the beginning of a term. In addition, it was evident that teachers use rubrics to assess student work. However, the process of how an understanding of student performance on assessments informs adjustments to instruction or curricula within an academic term was not consistently evident.

Additional Findings

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

Findings

School leaders and teachers ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, State standards, and the instructional shifts. In addition, learning tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits.

Impact

Purposeful decisions build curricular coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students. Higher order skills are embedded in curricular documents across grades and subjects for all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- A lesson plan for an English Language Arts (ELA) class began with the questions: “What is an argument that supports your stance?”, “What is one piece of evidence that may help support this position?” and “What is one article that may support your stance?” In addition to the rigorous habit of developing supporting arguments, the plan called for students to use *Baldwin Annotations* to comprehend complex text.
- The main activity of a math lesson plan noted that small groups of students would present sample problems to the class with verbal and written explanations. Those not presenting would take notes and work to find connections between the topics presented in order to build concept maps. Math content aligned with Common Core Learning Standards includes using ratio and rate reasoning to solve real world problems, recognizing and representing proportional relationships between quantities, and solving real world and mathematical problems involving four operations with rational numbers.
- The primary learning activity of a science lesson was for students to write paragraphs that clearly have a statement that tells what will be proven (Main Idea), a quotation from the text (Evidence), (Analysis) of how the quotation proves the main idea, and a (Tie up or Transition) that sums up the point and transition to the next paragraph. This MEATY paragraph-writing framework was also noted in an ELA lesson plan focused on the analysis of poetry.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
---------------------------	---------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula, and student work products reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

There is uneven engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and limited demonstration of higher order thinking in student work.

Supporting Evidence

- In a class focused on students' ability to develop and support arguments, an annotation guide was projected on a screen for students to reference as needed as they worked. At one point, the teacher asked a question regarding students' opinions on governmental regulation of emergency contraception. She then asked which article of those provided did they use to support their argument and why. She invited students to agree or disagree with each other's choice of supporting article as well as their overall stance. One student pointed out that his highlighted text supported his argument that emergency contraception should be thoughtfully regulated. The annotated text alluded to laws that restrict the privilege to drive until a certain age. Such purposeful annotation and higher order thinking by students was not consistent across classrooms.
- Students in a math class were all annotating the same text. When asked how text was being prioritized for annotation, a student said she highlights anything that she finds interesting and any questions that come up for her. Later in the lesson a student elicited and charted questions from her peers. They included "What makes water good?", "What can be in water that is bad?" and "Can water taste different?" Students then took a reading comprehension quiz with questions such as "What year was the first water bottle sold?", "The majority of the water found in water bottles comes from where?" and "What are the top companies that sell bottled water?" These questions did little to push student thinking, encourage discussion or engage students in a deeper understanding of the assessed learning targets stated in the lesson plan which were "I can explain why water is necessary to me" and "I can collect, organize, and analyze data to use as supporting evidence".
- During a science lesson, the teacher was explaining, modeling and clarifying how students were to annotate and look for main ideas, analyze evidence and transition. Though students followed along, took notes and copied all that was modeled for them, this portion of the lesson provided little opportunity for students to think, share, or inform each other's understanding of the content and processes being taught.
- The learning targets in an ELA class focused on poetry analysis, specifically as it relates to symbolism. Pairs and small groups of students were expected to collaborate in selecting a poem from a number of choices and identify tangible sensory to imaginary details, what the details represent and then engage in discussion about their findings. However, in some cases, students were not collaborating and did little to compare their analyses of the same poem. When the lesson was to transition to student group discussions, a number of students listened to one of the teachers as she shared her analysis of the poems.

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

Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured inquiry-based professional collaborations. Distributive leadership structures are in place across the school.

Impact

Professional collaborations promote the achievement of school goals and are strengthening teacher capacity. Teachers have a voice in school decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- During a teacher team meeting, teachers followed a protocol that required that they analyze assessment data, discuss implications for the semester and identify next steps. Specific questions embedded in the protocol included “What understandings did we gain from looking at these results?”, “Based on the diagnostic results, what are we thinking about our own classes?” and “What questions do we want to come back to regarding our learning targets?”
- Teachers discussed how data analysis revealed that modeling was an issue for a number of students. As a result, the math team developed a course where modeling was a key skill that was strategically revisited throughout that term.
- Minutes from teacher team meetings as well as conversations with school leadership and staff indicate that teachers are integral in making key decisions for how teaching and learning occur. Teachers in one department increased the levels of writing and speaking by increasing the number of tasks and creating writing and student presentation rubrics.
- In addition to designing PBATs across content areas, a team of teachers and advisors developed a curriculum to build students’ socio-emotional skills.