



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

J.H.S. 008 Richard S. Grossley

Middle School Q008

**108-35 167 Street
Queens
NY 11433**

Principal: Angela Green

**Date of review: May 12, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Rosemary Stuart**

The School Context

J.H.S. 008 Richard S. Grossley is a middle school with 371 students from grade 6 through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 12% Asian, 56% Black, 21% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 13% English Language Learners and 27% students with disabilities. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 90.0%.

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	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	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	Focus	Developing

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations and provide training to all teachers regarding pedagogical practices. School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations for college and career readiness to all families and offer ongoing feedback.

Impact

School leaders hold teachers accountable and parents understand the progress their children make toward meeting expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders reinforce their expectations for teaching practices through the informal and formal observation process. In one observation, a school leader urged the teacher to use Webb's *Depth of Knowledge* (DOK) to develop a range of questions that reach levels three and four. Additional feedback noted that the teacher should ensure that students have access to extension opportunities if they have completed their assigned tasks. The principal provides feedback to teachers on their lesson plans and holds them accountable by giving them a rating from zero to three on the elements of alignment, inclusion of the instructional shifts, instructional supports, and assessment.
- In addition to using information from observations and classroom visits, school leaders surveyed teachers to inform professional development opportunities. Teachers are encouraged to work with coaches and instructional leaders to explore and implement new pedagogical strategies. Several teachers indicated they wanted to learn more about the schoolwide initiative on using rotating learning stations.
- Report cards and interim quarterly progress reports provide details about classwork, quizzes, attendance, homework and class participation, giving family's information about the progress their children are making in their courses and extended learning time. A parent stated that the constant feedback helps them to support their children to stay on track to being successful.
- Teachers provide weekly homework sheets with assignments and reminders about upcoming quizzes and project due dates. Parents described how these communications help them ensure their child is learning what is needed to prepare for high school. They indicated that using the PupilPath online grade reporting system or ClassDoJo makes it easy for them to monitor the progress their children are making. "You don't have to leave your job to check up on your child. That's a big bonus." Another parent emphatically stated that she will not allow her child "to be mediocre" and that she pushes her child to make sure he is prepared for the future.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Not all teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations aimed at the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. While teachers analyze student work and data about student performance, they are still developing the practice of conducting structured inquiry.

Impact

Teacher teams are beginning to affect improved teacher practice but not all groups of students are making progress toward goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Although there is a schoolwide vertical inquiry team composed of teachers across grades and content areas, not all teachers participate in structured inquiry teams. Teachers stated that they meet informally to discuss the performance of students they share and for common planning. One teacher said, and others agreed, that working with colleagues helps improve their instructional practices, adding, “I steal strategies from other teachers. Based on how well [my students] did before, I know it works if they do better.”
- The vertical inquiry team was observed reviewing data from a baseline assessment in social studies for two grade 7 classes that showed students struggled with writing argumentative essays at the beginning of the year. The team members used a protocol to examine essays about a *Wall Street Journal* article on parenting styles to determine if their subsequent instruction on stating claims and citing evidence had been effective. The protocol included identifying exemplary work for this task, as well as noticing how individual students used evidence. Teachers shared that they have seen growth in essay writing as student’s progress from grade 6 to grade 8, although they did not provide aggregated results of the writing assessment to show this progress. Seventh grade ELA exam results for 2015 show that 35% of general education students and 6% of students with disabilities passed with a Level 2 or higher.
- One teacher team analyzed how well students used concept circles to make connections between vocabulary words. Although there was a rubric accompanying this task, the work was not assessed using the rubric. Using their protocol for examining student work a teacher noted that one student was unable to make connections between the words “discipline, fundamental, mentor, and empathy” and that the next steps for supporting this student would be to start with more basic words. Some teachers analyze student work using a strategy of grouping students into four performance quadrants and then identifying common deficits for students in the lowest quadrant and common strengths for the students in the highest quadrant. After conducting such an analysis, two teachers planned to provide additional instruction in using “let statements” to translate information from word problems into algebraic expressions.

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 and content standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Written curricula and tasks emphasize rigorous habits for all students.

Impact

There is coherence in lesson planning across each grade and an emphasis on promoting skills leading to college and career readiness. All students consistently have access to academic tasks emphasizing higher-order skills across grades and subjects.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers and school administrators use the Tri-State Quality Review Rubric for Lessons & Units from *EngageNY* to evaluate the alignment of lessons and tasks to the Common Core Learning Standards. Teachers use the Rubicon Atlas program to create lesson plans. School leaders provide feedback to help teachers improve their curricular resources. For example, on a set of exit tickets from one lesson, the school leader asked the teacher to outline possible differentiation strategies to address the needs identified by the assessment resource.
- There is a schoolwide focus on emphasizing text-based evidence to support claims, vocabulary acquisition, and deepening conceptual understanding in math. Some, but not all, lesson plans explicitly reference the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. One lesson plan identifies the National Council for the Social Studies' standards addressed in the lesson.
- The school leaders have adopted curricular resources from a wide variety of sources. Teachers use Achieve 3000 to provide differentiated texts for literacy instruction as well as content texts in social studies and science. They use Common Core-aligned programs such as *CodeX*, *CMP3*, and *EngageNY*. The MyON program is used to provide targeted literacy resources for students with disabilities and the school has begun to use the MaxScholar program to support English Language Learners. The MaxScholar program allows teachers to track student performance as satisfactory, excellent, or not satisfactory. Teachers use *Great Leaps* to provide reading intervention for students with disabilities.
- Many teachers plan for tasks to address the learning needs of all students, so that students including English Language Learners and students with disabilities have access to curricula. One lesson plan includes a task for current and former English Language Learners (ELLs) to extract vocabulary words from historical documents about the United States in the nineteenth century. Another lesson was planned to include graphic organizers to help students of differing learning needs write arguments with relevant evidence on whether the United States in 1840 was the land of liberty. The focus on writing claims and providing supporting evidence is reflected in many lesson plans across grades and content areas.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

While many teachers provide multiple entry points for all students, there are uneven levels of rigor in class discussions.

Impact

Across classrooms, there is uneven student engagement in higher-order thinking skills and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Most lessons had differentiated tasks and scaffolded supports for students with disabilities or ELLs, such as working with a paraprofessional, a tutor, or online resources. In one class, the students rotated through tasks at stations. The texts at each station were on different aspects of culture in China and were accompanied by the question prompts at different DOK levels.
- In many classes, the discussion was teacher-led and bounced from teacher-to-student-to-teacher providing uneven opportunities for students to engage in high levels of independent discussion. In one class, the teacher missed an opportunity for deepening discussion by not responding when a student asked, “Can I tell you the reason for an independent variable?” There were a few instances where incorrect information was not corrected during the lesson, leaving open the possibility for confusion among the students. For example, one teacher referred to an unknown quantity represented by a letter in a subtraction problem as a variable. In another class, students were unclear about the meaning of “sic” in a quotation from a published document. One student thought it meant “slow down” and others had no idea that it referred to a grammatical error in the historical document.
- In a social studies class, students worked in groups to write paragraphs arguing whether or not the United States is the land of liberty. Each member of the group was responsible for one part of the paragraph: the introduction, the claim, the counterclaim, or the conclusion. This same strategy was used in another class on the same grade.
- In a math class, students converted information from a word problem into an equation with a one-step solution. The teacher planned stations with problems of different levels of difficulty and assigned students to groups based on their performance on the unit pre-test. The teacher introduced a new graphic organizer during a whole class mini-lesson; however, the students did not have a copy of the graphic organizer to follow during this instruction or to use in their subsequent group work.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers use assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the curricula. Common assessments are used to determine students' academic progress.

Impact

Students and teachers have actionable feedback regarding their performance. Teachers use assessment results to adjust instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers assess students using a schoolwide common grading policy. The grading policy identifies the required elements of a grade for English Language Arts (ELA), math, social studies, and science. The required elements include pre- and post-tests, quizzes, projects, homework, and exit tickets. Many teachers create specific rubrics associated with projects to provide guidance to students on how to complete the assignments. One such specific rubric describes characteristics of work in the categories of content, spelling and grammar, and presentation from level one through four. Science investigations include specific scoring rubrics for lab reports.
- A teacher used the schoolwide argumentative writing rubric to provide feedback to a student on an essay dealing with forging a Vermeer painting. The teacher noted the level of performance on five elements including the introduction, the claim, and the conclusion. The teacher added additional feedback noting that the student should consider using writing structures such as, "this demonstrates that...", or "this proves that..."
- Teachers administer common grade-level assessments in ELA and math four times during the school year. They administer a baseline and an end-of-year assessment in social studies and science. They track aggregated student performance by class and grade and develop action plans to address the issues revealed by analyzing these data. For example, in grade 7, teachers identified deficits related to reading informational texts and they decided to develop and implement scaffolds to help students meet standards. Teachers track the progress students with disabilities make using the *Great Leaps* program.
- Teachers use tasks and scoring rubrics that are modeled on the State tests to help students understand how they will be assessed on high-stakes exams. The student work resulting from these tasks are used to adjust instruction. A grade 6 student wrote an essay on competitive pumpkin growing and received feedback on how well he used details from the article to support the explanation. Occasionally feedback to students is not as detailed. One piece of student work in final form contained multiple grammar and punctuation errors with feedback that indicated exemplary performance for command of standard English conventions.
- Teachers and school leaders conduct a cycle of inquiry for small groups of students, the Focused Five, who are close to achieving the next higher level or at risk of slipping to a lower level on the State ELA and math exams. They identify the gaps in learning related to specific standards using benchmark assessments and create an improvement plan. One plan noted that the student had improved in determining the meaning of words in a text from a benchmark score of 42% to producing work with an average of 80% as a result of the interventions provided.