Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

J.H.S 022 Jordan L. Mott

Middle School X022

270 East 167 Street
Bronx
NY 10456

Principal: Edgar Lin

Date of review: March 2, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Daisy Concepción

The School Context

J.H.S. 022 Jordan L. Mott is a middle school with 427 students from grade 6 through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 1% Asian, 26% Black, 72% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 37% English Language Learners and 22% 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 89.8%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
To what extent does the school…	**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**	**Developing**
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		
To what extent does the school…	**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		
To what extent does the school…	**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 for instruction, provide training and have a system of accountability for those expectations. School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness to families.

Impact
These high expectations result in a system of accountability for all members of the school community. Ongoing feedback to parents about student achievement provides support for families to understand student progress toward those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders implemented a structure called “22’s-22,” which are 22 expectations for J.H.S. 22 to promote student ownership. The principal was emphatic when he stated, “student ownership is the school goal.” These 22 expectations are aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching.* Guidelines for lesson planning, the design of rigorous tasks with scaffolds and aligned assessments with clear next steps for students are provided the staff. To this end, the principal has provided professional development and a study in lesson planning and student engagement. He supports norming school practices and ensures accountability through instructional rounds with coaches and grade leaders. Results and expectations are shared with the staff through grade and content leaders in what the principal calls “cascading messages.” A review of observations reveals the push for ownership with feedback such as “Provide opportunities within the lesson for students to formulate their own questions and allow students to peer evaluate each other’s work.”

- Parents stated that they feel that there has been a change in the school because of an emphasis on collaboration and academic success. They feel that the focus on the student uniform, routines and student supports have provided a good foundation so that now there can be consistent attention to the improvement of instruction. They shared that the school communicates the expectations for student achievement through letters, monthly newsletters, progress reports and phone calls. The school has a strong system of academic intervention and parents gave the example of a student who recently arrived at the school and already is receiving intensive English lessons and tutoring.

- Through various workshops, such as, Curriculum Night, parents are informed of the curriculum. Explanations regarding the use of evidence from the text and the new math that requires multiple representations proved to be helpful to those who attended. Parents have requested additional workshops and the school is currently in the process of planning more opportunities for them to learn about the pacing of the units of study.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing

Findings
Across classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula. The level of work assigned to the students is inconsistent across classrooms.

Impact
These inconsistent strategies result in uneven engagement by students with challenging tasks. Students, including ELLs and students with disabilities, experience inconsistent engagement with higher order thinking and discussion.

Supporting Evidence

- In one grade 8 science class, students worked in stations to explore the effect that the phase of the moon has on tides. Students sat in groups either reading moon tide graphs, making predictions about high tides and low tides, or they sat in groups looking at ocean levels in relation to the quarters of the moon. In all groups, students were able to use the academic language and terms of the unit to describe relationships and changes in wave patterns due to changes in the moon. Students questioned each other and explained their thinking with evidence.

- In an Integrated Co-Teaching social studies class, students engaged in a conversation about racism and the issues of white police officers shooting black people. Students had no texts in front of them. The conversation was limited to repeating the same idea over and over again with no elaboration. Students were then asked to walk over to one side of the room if they agreed that there is racism and another side if they felt that there was progress against racism. Students went to different sides of the room and repeated the same conversation and did not cite a text or build on their ideas. One frustrated student walked away angrily raising her voice saying, “We just keep saying the same thing!” Students were reminded to use a zero or one voice level. High level, challenging questions were not asked limiting the opportunities to learn.

- In an English Language Arts class, the teacher wanted students to understand tone, mood and the connotations that images conveyed. In a mini-lesson where the teacher provided many scaffolds, students were asked to address the tone the image brought to mind. Students offered “fearless” and “powerful.” She repeated this same modeling for a series of sports logos asking the same questions resulting in the same adjectives of “fearless” and “powerful” over again. Students then engaged in this same process at their tables with the very same results. No new understanding or connection surfaced. Deepening of the understanding of the definition of tone or mood or its relevance to literature was lacking.

- In a science class comprised mainly of English Language Learners, the learning objective focused on understanding the states of matter. Students quietly stared at an article on matter and a graphic organizer. The article included information about density and discussed matter in the solid state. The graphic organizer was in the form of a table with the states of matters listed. Some students were able to complete it. Many failed to attempt the tasks because of their limited fluency with the vocabulary. When asked, students replied in Spanish that they could not read English and they had nothing to help them. Multiple entry points for all students were absent leading to uneven learning taking place.

Additional Findings

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

Findings
The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations and distributive leadership structures are in place.

Impact
A focus on inquiry has resulted in teachers supporting standards based work and reflecting on their practice. Distributive leadership ensures that teacher teams have voice in all decisions supporting students and their achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- During the teacher team inquiry meeting, teachers examined student work on figurative language. As they examined the work they noticed that when very specific modeling had been provided, students had responded by closely following the model and that some of the more creative answers had been provided by students who had more opportunity to interpret the material for themselves. They also noticed that students who began by restating the question performed at a higher level. They observed that they had not specified restating in the task and they decided adding this specificity would be an adjustment to the task in this unit and added that they would be collecting student work to validate these observations.

- A review of teacher team minutes reveals that teachers reflect and discuss trends and patterns in student understanding and misconceptions. Once these patterns are identified, teachers plan for re-teaching and include a rationale as to what why they are taking a new course of action. For example, a review of student work involving how to find a variable given a certain volume was mastered by only 33% of students in grade 8. The teachers noted that students needed more time to learn how to solve equations. Re-teach lessons were added to the upcoming math unit. In another team meeting, teachers reflected on the results of a common assessment and its implications that teachers increase the use of multiple entry points in their lessons. Teachers stated that they design lessons based on findings from the assessment analysis. They shared that through teacher meetings, they provide and receive collegial feedback on their lessons. They also shared that they work collaboratively on lesson study with the additional lens of a critical friends' protocol to ensure that lessons meet student needs. Teachers stated that this combination of approaches has strengthened their instructional practices by enabling them to incorporate practices that support engagement.

- There is an expansive network of teacher teams supporting distributive leadership in the school. These tiers of teacher teams are involved in all aspects of the school ensuring that teachers are included and have a voice in all decisions. For example, the school has content area and grade level leaders for their various teams. These teacher teams cover everything from instruction to school climate, attendance, academic intervention and response to intervention. These teams meet twice a week. Grade leaders meet on Tuesdays and Fridays and they discuss positive classroom engagement strategies using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching.* During a teacher team interview, teachers shared that they are involved in all aspects of student learning and support.

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Developing

Findings
School leaders and faculty are in the process of aligning curricula to Common Core Learning Standards, content standards and integrating the instructional shifts. Academic tasks emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills inconsistently across grades and subjects.

Impact
The school has yet to make purposeful decisions on how to coordinate the various curricula that it uses and tasks inconsistently reflect rigor and grade appropriate work for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The school initially adopted *Expeditionary Learning* as the English Language Arts (ELA) program and *CMP3* as the mathematics curriculum. After analyzing student work, they decided to move away from a program-driven curriculum to an approach that allowed them to select the standards they wanted to emphasize for each grade. Students are not uniformly exposed to common core-aligned curriculum and the instructional shifts. Units contain many worksheets from different sources and excerpts of articles, but lack the staircase of complexity in texts and the balance of genre in ELA.

- The rigor of tasks in units and in lessons in the same content and grade vary greatly. While a grade 8 social studies unit on the Reconstruction Period reflects a task requiring students to write an essay comparing, contrasting and evaluating Lincoln's, Johnson's and the Radical Republicans' plans, another 8 grade social studies unit task asked students to write a summary of an excerpt of Mandela's memoir and to include the main idea and two supporting details. One of the lessons in this unit asks students to write one sentence to express the central idea of the memoir. In another lesson in the same unit, students are asked to write a summary of at least two sentences on Mandela's memoir. This uneven approach results in inconsistent exposure to higher-order thinking for the students.

- While a grade 8 geometry lesson focuses on students being able to draw and recognize reflections, rotations, translations and dilations on a coordinate plane, another lesson plan on rational numbers dedicates a large portion of the class period to looking at student's comfort with integers. The final assessment in this lesson is to state the "level of comfort" with a "simple addition problem", a "simple word problem", and a "complex word problem."

- A review of lesson plans indicates that in almost all of the lessons a great deal of focus is on making behavioral expectations clear. They also reflect limited engagement with texts. Many of the lessons ask students to give opinions based on pictures and *BrainPOP* videos. Most planned questions are limited to recall type questions, thus limiting the opportunity for students to engage in rigorous thinking.

- Lessons reflect round robin reading and use of the jig saw protocol creating little opportunity for students to practice the standards of analyzing craft and language as well as the instructional shifts of reading vocabulary in context and practicing close reading strategies.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing

Findings
Across classrooms, teacher created rubrics are loosely aligned with the school's curricula. Teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact
Although assessment is a school focus, teachers' inconsistent assessment practices result in limited feedback to students and limited adjustments to lessons to meet students' needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers use several assessment rubrics including the 2015-2016 NYC Baseline and End of Year Performance Tasks rubric which was observed in a grade 7 social studies class. However, in many instances, these rubrics are used to calculate the grade and do not always provide students with a next step. Rubrics on bulletin boards showed that some teachers used a yellow or dark blue highlighter to color the various components. However, they did not provide actionable feedback so that students could improve their performance.

- Feedback to students does not consistently provide clear, actionable next steps. For example, feedback usually takes the form of "glows" or "grows". While in one social studies task the feedback stated, "Make sure your evidence really shows how it supports or refutes your claim" the feedback is not always clear. For example, student work on a bulletin board, listed the "glow" as "Good use of evidence & explanation" and the "grow," stated "You could explain your evidence more fully." This lack of specific examples as part of the feedback hinders students from understanding their next learning steps and making the adjustment to move to the next performance level.

- In a science class, students who were rotating through several stations were reminded to look up at the SMARTboard which listed the criteria for success. The criteria focused on the school's behavior system, such as completing work within a specified time and student voice level. Content-based criteria were not included in the criteria for success.

- Formative assessments were not consistently observed in the classes visited. In two of the four classes, where assessments were observed, the check for understanding was a thumbs-up or thumbs-down as students addressed agreement with the statement presented. For example, in a social studies classroom studying freedom of speech and the Second Amendment, the teacher asked if students thought that freedom of speech was important. A few students gave a thumbs-up but most students continued to look at the book or the board. Thus, this assessment failed to provide data that could be used to make effective adjustments to instruction.