Quality Review Report

2017-2018

J.H.S. 062 Ditmas
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 20K062
700 Cortelyou Road
Brooklyn
NY 11218

Principal: Barry Kevorkian

Dates of Review:
October 26, 2017 - October 27, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Marion Wilson
The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the Area of Celebration to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the Area of Focus to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as Additional Finding. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School

J.H.S. 062 Ditmas serves students in grade 6 through grade 8. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
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<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School Culture

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4  Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4  Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3  Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1  Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1  Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.2  Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1  Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to all teachers and provide strategically coordinated professional learning and coaching support. School leaders and staff purposefully and routinely communicate expectations, which propel students to the next level of readiness.

Impact
There is a culture of mutual accountability between teachers and school leaders where they support the implementation of agreed upon expectations for teaching and learning. School staff systematically coordinates efforts to ensure students are prepared for high school examinations and careers.

Supporting Evidence

- There are verbal and written structures in place to ensure that teachers are aware of the mutually agreed upon expectations of designing and implementing effective lessons. This shared expectation is actualized through the school’s three learning academies focused on providing a support structure for both teachers and students. Communications about having open-ended effective discussions and other school priorities are shared through informal conversations, emails, informational and instructional meetings, and the staff handbook to make sure students are making progress and receive engaging instruction. During teacher question-and-answer meetings, an overwhelming amount of teachers confirmed that they receive clear communications about how their classrooms and whiteboards should be arranged for a productive learning environment, how to design challenging academic tasks, and how to engage students through effective open-ended discussion questions. As a result, there is a well-coordinated system of support that helps administration and pedagogues to ensure that expectations are executed effectively.

- School leaders work together to ensure that the classroom environment protocols are followed in regards to creating an environment of respect and rapport as well as systems to manage student behavior. School leaders and staff send out newsletters and make daily announcements to communicate consistent expectations about the use of vocabulary and to encourage student voice in lessons. In turn, teachers support each other to ensure that they incorporate these practices into their daily routines. During one of the teacher team meetings, teachers had specific examples to share about the support they receive from consultants, administration, district personnel, and other teachers to ensure that their lessons include daily opportunities for students to participate in think-pair-shares or small group discussions. An overwhelming majority of teachers shared that because they hold administrators responsible for supporting their pedagogical needs, more teachers are seeing improvement in their overall Advance ratings.

- Staff members have established a culture for learning that provides all students, including those in high-need subgroups, with effective and strategic support that promotes and prepares students for the next grade and college and career readiness. A vast majority of the school’s eighth graders take Regents exams and are strategically matched with an advisor within one of the school’s academy structures to support their career pathway. Students are able to specifically name the necessary steps they need to take in order to move to high school, college and eventually their careers. As a result, the school has many positive impacts of their elevated expectations for students. For example, there was a significant increase in the number of students who received acceptances into specialized high schools. Many graduating eighth-grade students are also earning high school credit. As a result, the school exceeded the metrics for the progress they have seen with their English Language Learners (ELLs) and lowest performing students’ metrics.
Findings

While there are structures in place for administrative cabinet members to regularly evaluate and progress monitor curricular and instructional practices, there were missed opportunities for alignment between what is taught and how it is taught in different subjects. Administrators and teachers collaborate to evaluate the quality for teacher teamwork and professional development offerings each semester.

Impact

Leaders and faculty do not always make purposeful and timely adjustments to the instructional core and systems for improvements so that it results in greater coherence of practices across subject areas.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and staff consistently review student work and assessment data to gauge student understanding of important concepts being taught. However, there are missed opportunities for greater alignment and coherence between what is taught and how it is being assessed across all grades and departments. Some departments, like the English Language Arts (ELA) department, have multiple measures for determining if teaching is effective based on student writing products and their teaching methods. The mathematics, science, and social studies department have similar techniques but rely heavily on the outputs from the ELA department. The administrative cabinet shared that they are working with other departments across the school to help teachers evaluate the outcomes of similar measures to ensure they are reliable and valid across all departments. Systems and structures for planning, teaching, and assessing based on the Common Core Learning Standards are not always coherently demonstrated across all departments and grades.

- School and department leaders regularly review lesson plans based on the school’s expectations for planning using the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) with the English as a New Language Department. Some teachers are further along in their effective use of these template for planning and designing effective lessons in all subject areas. There were missed opportunities for a more streamlined and transparent structure whereby ensuring teachers strategically adjust lesson plans and curricula maps based on the elements of SIOP model in order to increase the coherence in planning across all subject areas. As a result, a few content specific teachers missed opportunities to embody the school’s beliefs and approach to planning and preparation for across grades.

- The school’s decisions about resources, goals, and long-term plans are adjusted as needed to increase the quality of student work products. In addition, there are structures are in place to assess the effectiveness of the professional development occurring and the work of teacher teams at analyzing student work. As a result, teachers shared that they have been unpacking their understanding of the standards to pay close attention to what they need to support student mastery of priority Common Core Learning Standards and content standards as evidenced by the identified priority and focus standards and instructional shifts contained in maps. However, this structure is not yet purposefully evaluating school-level practices across the vast majority of teacher teams to ensure that there is greater alignment with attention to what teachers need to do learn to do more effectively to support more students demonstrating mastery of the standards for both Regents and state exams. The school does not effectively align resource decisions, evaluate the effectiveness of teacher team work and professional learning experiences to ensure that these practices are supporting an increase of the number of students who are performing proficiently or above on both ELA and math state exams.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
School leaders and faculty ensure that curricular documents are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, integrate the instructional shifts, and make purpose decisions to build coherence. The majority of tasks consistently emphasize higher-order thinking skills for most students; however, they were not embedded in a coherent manner across the vast majority of grades and subjects.

Impact
The school’s curricular resources promote college and career readiness for all students. Higher-order skills are emphasized across the grades and subjects so that most students, including ELLs and students with disabilities, have access to challenging lessons.

Supporting Evidence

- The school encourages the use of common lesson plan elements, which includes the content objective, learning objective, key vocabulary and key vocabulary. Lesson plans, including the SIOP template, is utilized throughout the school and contains common elements including the Common Core Learning Standards, language standards, checks for understanding, and lesson steps. An ELA unit addresses Common Core-aligned standards such as producing clear and coherent writing appropriate to task and drawing evidence from literacy information to support analysis, reflection, and research. Lesson plans highlight key academic vocabulary for each unit. A sample math curricula document infused instructional shifts such as fluency, application, and conceptual understanding. For example, students have to write an equation, solve multistep word problems, and assess reasonable answers using mental math and focused conversations with their peers. As a result, the school is integrating key instructional shifts across most written curricula documents in various subject areas.

- In an effort to build coherence, documents are arranged in a vertical manner in most subjects and grades. Lesson planning templates in some departments flesh out detailed learning outcomes, enduring understandings, knowledge, essential questions, skills, and performance task assessments. For example, a lesson plan required students to cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as make inferences drawn from the text. Most lesson plans require making their thinking visible through pre-planned discussion questions. Written plans have criteria listed on the key skills and essential questions for units.

- Teachers use Hess Cognitive Rigor Matrix or Webb’s Depth of Knowledge charts to guide the planning process around embedding questions that require elements of critical thinking. For example, pre-planned questions included literal, inferential, and meta-cognitive type thought-provoking questions. Plans include activities and resources in students’ native language and incorporate information on language objectives and key vocabulary to address the needs of ELLs. Essential questions add an additional layer of complexity in curricular documents to ensure that tasks are planned with the appropriate level of rigor for most students. There were a few missed opportunities in planning documents reviewed for thoughtful extensions or enrichment activities to be embedded within tasks. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are evident in the majority of core subject areas but not all. A few plans only required students to determine the central idea of an article, give examples of linear equations with one variable, or compute the sum and differences in scientific notation. Other documents included tasks where students have to synthesize, analyze, consider multiple perspectives, and discuss strategies that will lead to multiple pathways of thinking.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Across most classrooms, there are graphic organizers, visual displays, dictionaries, and math manipulatives available during lessons to provide multiple entry points into lessons for all learners, including ELLs and students with disabilities. Teaching practices create opportunities for students to justify their thinking and have a genuine discussion between each other.

Impact

Most instructional student groups are organized and support student learning so that students can complete classwork and access the curricula. Student conversations and research projects reflect high levels of engagement.

Supporting Evidence

- Across most classrooms visited, teaching strategies utilize scaffolds, including concept maps, annotated note taking tools, visuals, technology, and academic vocabulary to ensure tasks were accessible. In a seventh-grade math lesson students used math models to solidify their understanding of lessons or critique the thinking and reasoning of others. Most lessons included instructional shifts such as application, text-based answers, and writing from sources. For example, in an eighth-grade ELA class, students were reading a text and finding evidence to support their understanding of what was read. Students had text on their appropriate reading levels, highlighters, markers, and saw a video to help spark engaging discussions. To wrap up the lesson the teacher asked, “What did you learn about the quality of the evidence you collected?” Students responded about that some evidence was not strong enough to support their claims. In a math class, students were reviewing and interpreting data from various sources. They had note taking tools and materials and experience charts posted to refer to about how to use data to make decisions.

- Student engagement in learning was consistent across classes in which students had structures for conversations, strategies to support their learning, clues, and notes to help them with close reading activities. In addition, there were academic word lists, highlighters, experience charts, highlighted and annotated texts, and laptops for research available in classes to support student work. Teaching practices in most subjects included project-based activities, collaborative learning, and discussions that promote high levels of student thinking and engagement. The use of effective multiple entry points were evident in classes visited such as using students' native language to support their understanding of content. The teacher modeled when necessary or used other students as supports during the learning process. Students were actively working and motivated to explain their thinking utilizing the manipulative materials or strategies based approach that they learned.

- Most teachers provided students with challenging tasks that required critical thinking, analysis, and problem solving. Teachers ask students open-ended questions and who then speak to a partner or in a small group. Teachers’ questions varied but some provided questions that encouraged students to make connections between concepts, synthesize complex material, or promoted meta-cognition. Students in an ELA class shared thoughts comparing two main characters with complex texts they were reading. While there were a few missed opportunities for students to take ownership of discussions, there were classes where students engaged in evidence-based talk and helped to determine the direction of the lesson, which is aligned to the school’s instructional focus.
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

There are common assessments tools across most subject areas that help to determine student progress towards both short and long-term goals. Teachers check for understanding and provide opportunities for students to assess their work against checklists or rubrics across most subjects.

**Impact**

Results from periodic, unit, and teacher-created assessments inform changes to student groups and instructional strategies used with students. Most teachers make on-the-spot adjustments during lessons to meet student learning needs.

**Supporting Evidence**

- There are common formative assessments that help teachers assess concepts and focus standards students need to know and be able to do. School-level assessments are administered to determine if students are learning the content. Running records, end-of-unit math tests, writing assignments, content-area quizzes help provide evidence of what students know and do not know. Teachers also utilize information from Schoology and baseline assessments to re-arrange the order of units, select resources, or develop new tools and strategies to support student learning. For example, changes were made to pacing calendars and small group instruction after teachers used students’ results from IXL Math diagnostic questions to determine student groupings for future class sessions or Academic Intervention Support (AIS) pull-out services. As a result, groups of students showed improvement in solving multi-step word problems and understanding multiplying and solving quadratic equations by factoring.

- As a result of frequent checks for understanding, teachers adapt their use of strategies to support learning during instructional time. Most teachers use cold calling, questioning for explanation, observing students while they work, or exit slips to elicit information about students’ understanding during the lesson. The real-time adjustments are effective and correlate to how students self-assess their own level of understanding. For example in a seventh-grade class, the teacher noticed that quite a few students were not using evidence from the text to support their discussions, so the teacher interrupted the student-led discussion to remind students that it is important to cite evidence to support your thinking in a literary context. In another class, both teachers met with students and conferenced with them about their work asking questions relevant to their understanding. Teachers took notes as students shared the strengths and weaknesses of their learning. Teachers monitor student understanding by circulating throughout the room, asking questions, and making notations in lesson plans or unit plans about how students are handling the content. In one ENL class, students had to complete a concept map about empathy in the texts they were required to read. The teacher noticed that some students struggled with using the word in a complete sentence so she modeled for students.

- Most students have opportunities in various subject areas to self- or peer-assess their work against assessment criteria, such as a rubric or checklist and monitor their own progress. For example, in one class visited, students circled their level of understanding of the day’s lesson on an exit ticket to indicate whether they need additional support or remediation the following day. The results of frequent checks also help determine small instructional or guided group work. Evidence of this practice was noted in lesson plans, looking at student work, and through conversations with students and teachers. In addition, teachers generally ask questions of students to check their understanding. Teachers pose questions to students such as, “Can you prove it? How do you know? Where in the text did you find that evidence?” were used in many classes to help teachers take the pulse of the lesson.
Findings
Teacher teams consistently review and analyze writing samples from students, sometimes through an interdisciplinary lens. There are distributive leadership structures in place across teams and departments.

Impact
As a result of teacher team work, teachers have improved their use of instructional scaffolding and formative assessment strategies. Teachers have a voice in key decisions that positively affects student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams collaborate within grade-level and department structures to share insights on their teaching practices to help improve their teaching and look at progress for groups of students. The school has various team structures in place, which include departmental, vertical, and grade-level teams to review the online tool entitled Goalbook, which has helped ensure that they are using research-based best practices to support their student population. Teacher teams work to build instructional coherence through lesson designs, units of study, and how they look at student assessment data. Teacher teams review performance tasks, quizzes, and class assignments to note the effectiveness of their teaching and students’ learning and whether students still need the use of certain graphic organizers to support their understanding of tasks. For example, grades six and seven teachers developed rubrics with detailed explanations and annotations for students to judge their ability to support a claim with logical reasoning and relevant evidence while demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text. According to a tracking document tracking the results of argumentative writing essays in the English Language Arts departments, the majority of students showed improvement in this area based on the models, and more opportunities to practice. As a result, regular teacher team meetings assist teachers in being able to look critically at student work and incorporate varied instructional scaffolds to support the strengths and areas of growth for their struggling students.

- Teachers receive flexibility in attending outside professional learning opportunities and play a role in the type of curricular resources that are used across the school. For example, teachers shared that after attending trainings for major publishers they were able to implement aspects of Scholastic Code X and IXL Math to enhance the resources being utilized to promote higher order thinking skills for their students. In addition, during the question and answer meeting, the majority of teachers felt that school leaders afford them time to learn, grow, and collaborate with colleagues and lead the work that they feel is most beneficial to their students. There are systems and structures to meet as a grade level or department, depending on their focus. As a result, strategies that are being implemented in departments and grades are now being shared across the school to help build greater coherence in teaching and learning.

- School leaders and teachers alike were able to identify grade-level and department leaders, instructional coaches, and counselors who make decisions that affect the school’s day-to-day program. For example, one teacher shared that the lesson template used by most teachers was not yielding access to the content for her ELLs so she was able to implement the SIOP template to support this subgroup of students. Based on a review of curricula documents, more teachers have started using the template to address the needs of their students even if they do not service ELLs in their classes. In addition, grade-level leaders attend outside professional development sessions organized by the district and the Field Support Center, which is resulting in more meaningful student-to-student discussions in most classes.