



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**Jordan L. Mott School**

**Middle School 022**

**270 East 167 Street  
Bronx  
NY 10456**

**Principal: Shimon Waronker**

**Dates of review: February 6 - 8, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Barry King**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Jordan L. Mott Junior High School is a middle school with 667 students from grade 5 through grade 8. The school population comprises 18% Black, 70% Hispanic, 1% White and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 38% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 93.4%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 95% eligibility.

The current principal took over the school in November 2004 after a succession of principals who had stayed only a short time. He was commissioned to turn the school around. He has introduced eight mini-schools, which are known as “academies”, so that students have the experience of working in smaller learning communities.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal has created a climate of high expectations and developed management structures that give the school good capacity to improve further.
- The tone of the school has been transformed and it is now a much more orderly learning environment.
- The high expectations and improved instruction are in the process of raising achievement, not least for special education students.
- The school's approach to raising attendance has been extremely effective.
- The creation of eight mini-schools has created closer relationships between teachers and students and has empowered the staff to be more involved in decision making.
- The school collects and analyzes data well to gain a good overview of student progress.
- The school makes well-judged strategic decisions on the basis of the data it collects.
- The learning environment in classrooms is generally good and students are now interested and willing learners.
- The range and extent of professional development is an important factor in increasing the school's capacity to improve instruction.
- The school has created arrangements to facilitate a good level of collaboration between staff.

### What the school needs to improve

- Use data and align professional development to consolidate the differentiation of instruction.
- Develop instructional strategies that will continue to build the self-esteem of students, including the greater use of accountable talk and partnerships with outside agencies.
- Set challenging but realistic interim and longer-term goals for individual students, against which their progress can be measured and evaluated.
- When resources allow, improve the use of information technology to stimulate student interest in what they are learning.
- Improve the planning of the school's innovative interdisciplinary curriculum.

## Part 3: Main Findings

### **Progress made since the last review**

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report

### **Overall Evaluation**

#### **This school is well developed.**

The substantial improvement in the school reported in the previous Quality Review has been sustained and built upon, so that it is now well developed in most features of its work. This represents an impressive achievement by the principal and his staff. The tone of the school is now one where the students are willing and able to learn. This is reflected in the improved attendance, which the school has been exceptionally effective in raising. Staff have high expectations that students will do well, which is having a significant impact on student achievement, especially for the special education students. The eight academies now include all students and they are proving very effective in strengthening the commitment of students to their education. The academies are also helping to build the school's capacity to continue its improvement by developing the leadership skills of the teachers who run them. The well-planned opportunities for staff collaboration and professional development are supporting them well in introducing an innovative curriculum. This is rigorous while also increasingly engaging for students. The school has a well-judged priority to improve the planning of the curriculum's interdisciplinary elements. It has taken important first steps to increase the use of modern technology in lessons, something students enjoy, but the amount of hardware is currently limited.

The school gathers and analyzes data thoroughly and the work of its inquiry team is well targeted. Staff use data to differentiate some work for students well, for example in reading, but do not do so consistently. The administration has set clear and demanding goals for the academies to improve achievement, although it has not so far set precise goals for individual students. The students are taking much more pride in what they achieve. They are growing in self-esteem but they have too few opportunities in school or through outside placements to become self-confident talkers. The school has a growing and well-earned self-confidence about the quality of education offered to students. This is reflected in the excellent gains the school has made with student attendance

### **How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria**

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the student's progress over time.**

#### **This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The school has improved the ways in which it generates and gathers data and it now has a well-developed overview of the progress of each student, class and grade. It

thoroughly analyzes the data from the State tests and from the periodic assessments using Acuity, and presents this information clearly in graphical form. This collation of data shows particularly clearly the trends in overall school achievement over time, and also the progress of each cohort within the school. It was through this analysis that the school focused its inquiry team on grade 7, where for year after year the students dipped below their previous levels of performance. The school is very alert to the performance of similar schools, against which it is continually comparing itself. Given the low achievement in the school for many years, it has focused its attention particularly closely on the rate at which students achieving Level 1 in State tests have managed to improve, with the outcomes showing substantial improvement in the recent past. Now that students are in the small academies, where they have contact with just a small number of teachers, their progress through everyday assessment is well known to their teachers and scrutinized carefully. English language learners and special education students benefit from the same close attention as general education students and are subject to some additional tests, such as the Wilson reading assessments for the latter. The faculty have been well supported in the use of data through specific training days and ongoing discussions in their collaborative meetings.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student’s next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student’s learning.**

**This area of the school’s work is well developed.**

High expectations have replaced despair. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the two special education academies, where students are encouraged to aim high. The impact can be seen in the pace of lessons and the challenging tasks that special education students undertake with a good deal of success, such as writing poetry about the topics they are studying. The school sets out its priorities for improvement clearly and the administration has established precise global goals for each academy to achieve over the year. The academies collaborate well with each other in considering their long-term goals, and have in some cases set goals that exceed those expected by the administration. Teachers give individual students shorter-term learning goals that arise from their everyday learning and the periodic assessments. The school is hugely ambitious for the students to succeed. However, it does not yet set individual students precise, longer-term goals, with interim benchmarks, against which their rates of progress might be measured and evaluated. The exception to this is the creation of precise goals for special education students contained in their individual education plans. The school community is now well aware of the school’s determination to drive up standards but the school’s central objectives have not been communicated to all stakeholders, including the parents. The parents do, however, receive regular information on the progress of their children. This includes not only the report card sent four times a year and parental evenings, but notes written by students to their parents to communicate how well they have done and what they now need to learn. In this way, both are students and parents are clear about the next steps in learning.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.**

**This area of the school’s work is well developed.**

The tone of the school has been transformed over the past four years. Corridors are now safe and classrooms accepted as places of learning. Trust between students and teachers is now well established, and has been much encouraged by the creation of the small academies that have made it easier for friendly and trusting relationships to develop. One student summarized this by saying, “Everybody knows each other and treats each other like a team.” In lessons, students generally show good attitudes, listen respectfully to each other and demonstrate the desire to learn. The impact of their improved attitudes is manifest in improvements in achievement and gains in their personal confidence, but there is still some way to go for them to become assured talkers. This is partly because the opportunities for them to speak in lessons and gain experience from adult environments are not extensive enough.

The school has made it a priority to make the curriculum relevant and interesting for the students. With this aim in mind, the administration has introduced an interdisciplinary curriculum that unites the separate subjects. This is well organized in terms of ensuring that the mandated curriculum is taught. Academies are given some leeway in deciding how to pace their instruction, reflecting the principal’s desire that “Teachers should own their work here.” However, both the administration and faculty are aware that more planning is required to consolidate the interdisciplinary approach. The school has taken important steps in making learning more interesting for students by stimulating their imagination through external visits and acquiring a number of laptops and Smart boards. The students find the latter riveting, but so far they are few in number. The curriculum is broadened by a large number of clubs and activities, notably a very successful school marching band. In four of the academies, students receive dual language instruction, in Spanish or French, generating very high expectations for students who are not native speakers of these languages. Teachers use data on students to differentiate instruction to meet their needs through strategies such as book clubs, conferencing and the grouping of students, but the process of differentiating tasks is not yet common across the school.

The administration has worked with determination to ensure that competent teachers are hired. The budgeting and scheduling decisions are well organized and to some extent delegated, with important decisions left to the academies. The great success of the school in raising attendance, noted at the time of the previous Quality Review, has been maintained, with another substantial jump in attendance over the past year. This reflects the school’s relentless determination and the robust procedures to get students into school. These include the hiring of a full-time attendance teacher, rapid contact with home when absence occurs and rewards for good attendance. Equally, the school has become a place where students can enjoy their education and feel safe, so that they want to be present.

**Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

**This area of the school’s work is well developed.**

The principal's strong leadership has been instrumental in the extensive rebuilding of the school's capacity to offer an acceptable education. He has confronted and resolved difficult problems and led staff well in creating an orderly building. The creation of academies is empowering other staff to take a greater responsibility in making decisions about the alignment of instruction. This is helping to make the school's improvement sustainable, since the way it works does not depend solely upon the efforts of the central team. The staff have many opportunities to collaborate and learn from each other, as in the week-by-week common planning times and subject meetings, and the daily gathering of the extended cabinet. Professional development has been extensive and well matched to the school's priorities and the needs of individual teachers, whose requirements are surveyed and who choose from a menu of options. The school has built strong arrangements to support and guide the students, through extending the number of guidance counselors and placing students in small-school settings. Staff have become very aware of students' personal needs. The boundaries for students' behavior are clear and the school has a well-understood and stepped system for dealing with infractions. These arrangements have helped to make the school a much calmer environment, although the level of principal suspensions is still very high. Hand in hand with the administration's delegating of responsibility has been a strong system for ensuring the accountability of teachers, including classroom observations and discussions with line managers. The school has developed partnerships with a number of external organizations, including an internship at a Manhattan restaurant. Students value these experiences of the working world, which contribute well to their skills and self-confidence, but they do not meet all needs. For example, some students do not have placements in the vocational areas they would prefer.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

In moving ahead to the next initiative the school does not consistently evaluate existing programs fully enough, despite the extent of the data generated by periodic assessments. One important piece of the jigsaw that is missing in its monitoring of performance is the gauging of each student's rate of progress against longer-term goals. This means that the school does not have the framework for evaluating whether the progress of each student and class is fast enough, and then realigning the goals or instructional plans as necessary.

The school's leadership has used its knowledge of the school well to make important strategic decisions about its development. The success of these decisions is demonstrated by the remarkable turnaround in the quality of the education and opportunities offered to students. The principal's clear-sighted view that order needed to be restored, and workable management structures put in place, has laid the foundations of the school's current phase of development. Staff are now much better equipped to concentrate their energies on the quality of their instruction and this is beginning to pay handsome dividends as achievement rises. Underpinning the school's substantial and sustained improvement has been the principal's clear vision of a school that produces leaders and not followers, and of the strategic steps necessary to create a school that can deliver this.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Jordan L. Mott Junior High School</b>	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>				X	

### Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?				X	
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?				X	
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				X	

### Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?			X		
2.2 focus on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area?				X	
2.3 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?			X		
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?				X	
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>				X	

### Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?			X		
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?					X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				X	

<b>Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?				X	
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?			X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>					X

<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>					
<b>To what extent do . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?				X	
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?			X		
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?				X	
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>					X

◇	<b>Outstanding</b>
+	<b>Well Developed</b>
✓	<b>Proficient</b>
➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>