



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

W. Arthur Cunningham School

Intermediate School 234

**1875 East 17 Street
Brooklyn
NY 11229**

Principal: Susan Schaeffer

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Reviewer: Barbara Kwiecinski

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The W. Arthur Cunningham Intermediate School serves the diverse needs of 1771 students. The school describes itself as a 'mini United Nations' and ably supports the needs of English language learners whose predominant languages are Spanish, Russian, Urdu and Chinese. Eight percent of the student population are English language learners. Forty three and a half percent of students are White, 24.1% are Black, and 21% are Asian and others. Six percent of students are special education students. The school receives Title 1 funding with 63% of students eligible, which is below the rate for City schools but above that for similar schools.

The school is proud of its good attendance, which is currently at 95.6% and is higher than similar schools and New York City averages.

This is an empowerment school. Empowerment schools have more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their school community. Empowerment schools are free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with, and benefit from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal sets high expectations for all the faculty and students and commands great respect.
- The administration work collaboratively, effectively supporting staff to use data to plan for and inform instruction.
- The school leaders consistently gather data to understand the performance and progress of each student and groups of students.
- There are very effective systems and structures in place to meet the diverse needs of students with the greatest need.
- Students speak very positively of the family atmosphere within the school, where teachers respond to their personal and academic needs.
- Teachers support each other, they speak proudly of the diverse student population and celebrate a 'proud past and look forward to an even brighter future'.
- The many enrichment opportunities strengthen and support the mandated curriculum and result in improved student academic performance.
- High expectations are conveyed to students, parents and caregivers resulting in effective partnerships which accelerate student progress.
- Teachers track individual student progress very effectively and ensure students understand how they can do even better.
- English language learners are well supported, receiving help in a variety of languages, which positively impacts on their progress.

What the school needs to improve

- Further refine all school plans to include interim goals and measurable outcomes within identified timeframes to further support the learning journey of all groups of interest to the school.
- To continue to support staff to plan and differentiate their instruction based on needs revealed by data and further share the very best differentiated practice within the school.
- To continue to align professional development decisions by needs revealed by student data and further formalize the measurement of development impact.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

The school is a collaborative community of learners described by both teachers and students as a family school where diversity is celebrated and the personal and academic needs of 1771 students are met. The principal is committed to making a difference and sees herself, the faculty and students as colleagues on a journey of lifelong learning. The student diversity is celebrated and interdisciplinary committees work together on shared projects such as Black History Month and Empowerment and Community.

Students speak positively about the school and truly believe that they are well supported by all staff and prepared academically to make effective choices when selecting high schools.

There is a strong emphasis on academic rigor and students talk with pride about their accomplishments. The variety of academic programs, the many enrichment opportunities and community partnership add an extra dimension to the mandated curriculum.

The school is proud of its teacher resource center, which is effectively manned by the mathematics and literacy coaches. A professional library is located in the center and furnishes staff with information and resources to service students appropriately.

There are good communications and support from the school to parents and caregivers and letters home, newsletters and reports are translated into many languages.

Available data, including feedback from parents, formative assessments, observations, 'walk-throughs' and faculty meetings, is used effectively to improve the school. However, data is not utilized as effectively to track some student groups and to set interim action planning goals with measurable outcomes and identified timeframes.

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 student progress over time.

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

The school uses many forms of data to understand the performance and progress of each student. At the beginning of each academic year, students are tested and each teacher has a consistent tally sheet of each student's annual yearly progress.

The school further refines the available data to understand the performance and progress of the many other sub groups within the school. This includes the performance of ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students and other categories of interest to the school. The data collection is very comprehensive and the cabinet are working very hard with all staff to understand its significance. This puts the school in a

very strong position to be more specific on how the data is used to alter instruction and track impact for all identified groups.

The school is an empowerment school which not only compares its achievement to that of similar schools and schools within the empowerment network but seeks opportunities to network with higher achieving schools and share best practice.

Good processes are in place to monitor progress for English language learners and special education students. Much additional data including that from the Read 180 program and Great Leaps, adds another level to the tracking data and informs instruction. Individual education plans are used effectively and sensitively to provide for the needs of these students who are monitored carefully and moved into general education classes smoothly. The school's performance is improving year on year and so is the school's effective use of data.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.

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

The school works very effectively in a collaborative way to use data to develop plans to meet the needs of each individual student. At the beginning of each school year, committees of teachers across grades and subject areas plan for each year based on the data from the previous year. This includes using summative, formative and comparative data. Goals are set and the school places great emphasis on looking at each child and their potential for growth. Through the many inter-related meetings, teachers are able to understand the needs of the 'whole child'. However, data is not routinely used to set measurable targets including timeframes to meet the goals or to plan for some areas of interest to the school.

The administration set high standards and all teachers are aware of the 'best practice rubric'. This is taken into account when teachers plan to meet the needs of students within their classes.

Based on data the school recognized the need to support the English language learners further. It effectively used a professional developer to work with the teachers of these students. As a result, their planning has altered and student performance has improved.

The performance and progress of students with the greatest need takes high priority. The pupil personnel team meetings are particularly effective where teachers and paraprofessionals work collaboratively to support students and parents in a positive way with defined responsibilities and outcomes.

High expectations are conveyed to students, parents and caregivers and the school is always seeking for new ways to include parents in the students' academic journey. The school is seen by teachers, parents and students as high performing school and all partners value the drive and determination of the faculty to improve student performance still more.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

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

The school effectively delivers many enrichment opportunities for all students which complement the mandated curriculum. Other programs are used that generate useful assessment data. The cabinet allows teachers ‘to fly’ and is supportive of their imaginative ideas to further engage students and support the school’s high expectations. For example, modern movies and media presentations are incorporated into the social studies curriculum. Software packages are used to support curriculum areas and in some mathematics classes, students were effectively solving problems on adding and subtracting algebraic expressions on laptops. They liked the fact that they had instant access to understanding their progress.

The principal and assistant principals have high expectations of all staff and work very closely with the coaches to ensure that all staff are well supported. There are many examples of differentiated planning to meet the needs of different student groups. The school is seen as a model of good practice in its identification of student need and subsequent lesson planning following the Princeton Review. The school is aware that the very good practice needs to be shared more widely and that differences in the quality of instruction reduced.

Budgeting, scheduling and staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and great care is taken to match teachers’ skills and expertise to the needs of the students.

Students speak positively about the instructional programs and particularly like lessons when they can see their relevance and link to other curriculum areas. One good example of this was when studying war in history they also learned songs that encouraged men to sign up to become soldiers.

Staff know and respect students and students feel well cared for. They speak very positively about the principal and are amazed at the number of students she knows and the care she gives.

Student attendance is high, currently at 95.6% and students enjoy coming to school. Students found it very difficult to identify any aspect of school life that they would change.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

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

The school is lucky in that due to its popularity there are always a large number of applicants for each new post. This gives the principal every opportunity to select staff of high caliber, committed to using data to effect change and making the school’s mission, ‘A proud past a brighter future’, a reality.

The principal operates an open door policy and all members of the administration team are highly regarded and supportive of all staff. On-going, daily professional development is of high quality and both the coaches and the administration regularly help colleagues to achieve, improve and provide academic rigor for the students. This is further complemented by 'critical friend groups' who look at student work to identify further areas for improvement. The Comprehensive Education Plan clearly identifies professional development related to school priorities. The administration realize the value of extending this planning to include measurable outcomes.

Lessons are observed frequently by the principal and the cabinet and teachers speak positively about the feedback and support they receive. Formal learning walks are recorded and graded on a clear consistent evidence sheet.

The school runs very efficiently and the school based support team, paraprofessionals and guidance counselors are integral to this.

The school has many partnerships with outside bodies and uses these effectively to support students' academic achievement.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The Comprehensive Education Plan identifies goals for school development. Supporting plans are then put in place in order that teachers can tailor instruction to address the school's identified goals. Success towards meeting goals is measured in a variety of ways including classroom observations, professional development outcomes and clear feedback. Plans are reflected upon and changed if necessary and the administration are very good at helping colleagues to refine practice.

The school has a wealth of data but as yet interim measurable goals are not always in place for each plan and this prevents the school from monitoring the plans as effectively as they could. The school is aware of this and is in a very strong position to refine practice and further build on the school's successes. This is particularly pertinent when setting interim goals and targets within and across classrooms and for particular groups of students. The school uses the Princeton Review as its interim data-gathering tool. This is particularly well used and teachers adapt their planning to focus on individual student need.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: W. Arthur Cunningham School (MS 234)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score			X

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 student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> each student, classroom, grade level, 			X
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 			X
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> all other categories of interest to the school* 			X
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.		X	
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and 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 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.			X
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.			X
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.		X	
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.		X	
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.			X
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.			X
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X	