

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**Arthur W. Cunningham**

**Intermediate School 234**

**1875 East 17<sup>th</sup> Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11229**

**Principal: Susan Schaeffer**

**Dates of review: January 30-February 1, 2012**

**Lead Reviewer: Linda Waite**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Arthur W. Cunningham is an intermediate school with 1856 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 19% Black, 12% Hispanic, 39% White, 29% Asian students and 1% other students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 95.6%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal uses the budget effectively to promote students' academic performance and teachers' professional growth. (1.3)
  - A school-based option creates common planning time for teachers to engage in professional collaborations such as inquiry which promotes the progress of targeted students. The budget funds an F-status, English Language Arts and math coach. The school also spends a portion of Title 1 funding to support collaborations by paying for substitutes and per-session. Hence, teachers regularly engage in small group and individual professional learning opportunities such as lunch and learn sessions, class inter-visitations, and workshops that allow them to learn new strategies and share best practices that impact on improving students' learning outcomes. The hiring of an F-status English as a Second language teacher to provide 80 minutes of additional instruction and target students' listening, reading and writing needs resulted in 40% of English language learners achieving proficiency thus meeting exiting criteria. Additionally, this decision is responsible for a majority of other students progressing to the next performance level as measured by the English as a Second Language Achievement Test. Furthermore, the principal's programming of an additional period of English language arts instruction for all level 2 students, hiring a dual licensed special education/math teacher, and 3 Integrated team teachers across the grades provided extra time on task and reduced student/staffing ratio earning the school 6.5 exemplary credits in English language arts and math thus narrowing the achievement gap for at-risk sub-groups. School leaders successfully utilize the observation process and student work that results in adult learning and student growth.
- School leaders successfully utilize the observation process and student work to promote adult learning and student growth. (4.1)
  - The principal asks all teachers to reflect on their instructional practice utilizing a research-based framework adopted by the school. This serves as the basis for the collaborative development of two professional goals and action plans that are submitted to and approved by the principal. As a result, teachers use the goals as a guide to improve and monitor their practice and hold themselves accountable for learning. Additionally, school leaders conduct frequent cycles of observations utilizing a pre-agreed upon focus and rubric to determine areas of strength and need. School leaders engage teachers in post-observation conversations and create timely observation reports using Teachscape to provide immediate individualized feedback and actionable next steps thus accelerating teachers' professional growth and student learning outcomes. Furthermore, school leaders use next steps from the short cycles and formal observations to align and schedule differentiated professional opportunities. Consequently, the professional development needs of all teachers are supported and they are achieving their personalized goals.
- The school offers a warm, caring, safe, inclusive environment that is conducive to academic achievement and success.(1.4)

- The Learning Environment Survey is linked to the school's focus on safety and respect. Deans visit classes to discuss the Code of Discipline and consequences while faculty and support personnel conduct informational sessions on safety, respect and bullying for students and parents. The substance abuse and prevention specialist coordinates the Open Mind Club which allows students to discuss issues related to race, creed and gender to develop tolerance. As a result, teachers and students are very respectful of one another, and there are fewer level 3, 4, and 5 incidents than last year as evidenced by the school's data reports. School administrators, teacher leaders and deans effectively collaborate in developing school rules and cooperate in adhering to the recently revised ladder of referral. Therefore, it is possible for the school's 1,856 students to quickly, quietly, and safely pass through the hallways to their classes. Behavioral and academic expectations along with routines make classroom environments conducive to learning and academic success. Hallways are decorated with performance tasks, rubrics, student work and actionable feedback. Consequently, the scholarship rate for all students, which is over 98% for each of core subjects, is higher than their peer group and city average. The school employs an academy structure, with each grade supervised by an assistant principal, counselor, and dean who move up the grades with their students and are responsible for coordinating instructional and support programs. Additionally, each student participates in a 15 minute homeroom period in the morning and a 5 minute homeroom period in the afternoon so reciprocal information can be shared, concerns identified/addressed and attendance taken. Consequently, students report that they look forward to coming to school, they are well known by many faculty members on staff and they feel comfortable seeking and receiving support for personal and academic needs. Parents reiterate saying, "We have never seen a school so large that knows so much about every student". Furthermore, attendance has increased from 95.2% to 96.2%.
- The school establishes goals and action plans that effectively align to school needs and accelerate students' learning.(3.1)
  - The school's well thought out and prepared Comprehensive Educational Plan is rooted in the belief that change occurs when data is utilized to establish meaningful long term and interim goals, the learning needs of teachers and students are addressed, and the Principles of Learning are adhered to and serve as the vehicle for improvement. Thus, the school is focusing on improving achievement in literacy for all students with special attention to students with disabilities and English language learners, and raising the achievement of all students by increasing parental communication and support. The implementation and consistent use of computerized literacy programs such as Achieve 3000 and Rewards to support these sub-groups is resulting in improved performance by a majority of students as evidenced by monthly computer generated performance assessments which are maintained and analyzed by classroom teachers. The School Leadership Team collaboratively plans and monitors goals, discusses progress and makes revisions. Therefore, all members engage in the shared leadership decision-making process. This strong sense of community together with the effective communication systems the principal utilizes to disseminate the Comprehensive Educational Plan such as hard and on-line copies to the team and Parents Association, the staff handbook, and Back To School Night to message goals which all serve to generate a broad base of support for the school's vision, mission and realization of goals.

- The school engages parents in communication, decision making and school related activities to support student achievement. (2.4)
  - Parents praise the school's use of ARIS, school messenger, the new website and Engrade which provides pertinent information concerning test grades, homework, projects, behavior and next steps and strategies. The school provides parents the opportunity to communicate with administrators and teachers concerning students' needs including preferential seating, the need to wear glasses, and home issues via an open door policy, e-mails, telephone calls, and Engrade. As a result, there is on-going reciprocal communication, parents feel that the school values their input and considers them key partners in their children's education. Furthermore, parents indicate that the principal engages them in workshops and activities that are consistently well attended as evidenced by attendance sheets. For instance, a recent celebration of student achievement was attended by over 550 family members. The school actively engages parents and gives them voice through membership on the School Leadership Team, Parent Association, and decisions regarding such things as uniforms, and fund raising making them committed to the school's success.
- Teachers effectively engage in structured professional collaborations to promote adult growth and student learning. (4.2)
  - A vast majority of teachers engage in structured professional collaborations using an inquiry approach to improve learning. For example, the 7<sup>th</sup> grade inquiry team is working with students in the bottom third of their classes on vocabulary acquisition across the content areas. Teachers conduct research and decide on appropriate strategies such as; employing explicit instruction, read around the text and a three column graphic organizer highlighting the key term, information about the word, and a memory drawing that represents the word (KIM). Additionally, they create test, monitor progress and establish next steps. Consequently, students' reading, writing, and expressive language is improving as evidenced by conferencing notes and writing samples graded using a rubric and teachers are growing professionally.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Refine curriculum to ensure that rigor and critical thinking are embedded across all grades and subjects. (1.1)
  - School leaders and faculty members are creating curriculum maps in English Language Arts and Math which align to the Common Core Learning Standards and address essential questions, content, skills, assessment, and technology integration. Additionally, item analyses of formative and summative tests serve to identify key standards that need to be addressed to further promote learning. As a result, 38.1% of students are earning high school credit as compared to the city average of 22.6%. Teachers utilize a template of sample questions by complexity to create higher order thinking questions, and the Depth of Knowledge Wheel to create rigorous tasks. For example, in an English class students read Emerson's essay on Self Reliance, listened to a clip of Emerson and Thoreau discussing the Transcendentalist movement, engage in accountable discussion and choose 1 of 4 tasks from a culminating group challenge. While the curriculum

is challenging the level of rigor is not yet consistent across all grades and subjects areas. Therefore, some students are not developing skills necessary for post-secondary success.

- Ensure that questioning and activities are differentiated sufficiently differentiated to meet the instructional needs of all students .(1.2)
  - Presently, a majority of teachers utilize various sources of data including running records, conferencing notes, questioning, and participation to form flexible learning groups based on reading and skill level. For example, in a science class students take on the roles of various oil company executives, conduct research, discuss and present the pros and cons of producing oil in the United States and make a decision based on data. In a math class students are presented with new design logos, made up of various angles and sides, and have to explain how the group solved the problem using formulas, properties or procedures. Teachers serve as facilitators asking questions to clarify or extend learning while students engage in accountable talk, utilize laptops for research and ensure that each student in the group is able to present and defend their position or answer. Thus, students instructional needs are being met, they are engaged, and they are accountable for their learning. However, this is not yet an embedded practice, and therefore, not always implemented on a consistently high level in all classes. Some students are not reaching their full potential.
- Ensure that teacher assessment practices reflect the use of on-going checks and analysis of information on student learning so that adjustment to instructional practice can take place in a timely fashion.(2.2)
  - While most teachers make effective use of on-going checks, such as; circulating from group to group listening and asking questions, calling on various students to solve and explain the process, and asking, “Did anyone get a different answer?” which help teachers to make on the spot instructional adjustments, in a few classes these strategies were not utilized. As a result, some students do not benefit from a teachable moment whereby information is presented in an alternate manner making it more easily understood. Additionally, some benchmark assessments such as; teacher made reading and vocabulary tests are administered on an infrequent basis which impedes the teacher’s ability to address areas of concern and limits their ability to remediate deficiencies. Also, while teachers utilize periodic assessment to identify class strengths and concerns some do not examine the data by grade and special population, thus limiting effectiveness.
- Refine systems for evaluating the sharing of student performance, organizing data to increase coherence of practice across the school.(5.2)
  - The school utilizes various systems to organize data. Teachers maintain classroom data in Engrade and spreadsheets that reflect progress in reading and on Acuity and interim-assessments. Teacher teams organize information in ARIS and the principal maintains data in googledocs. As a result, data is not always readily available which hinders the schools’ ability to make quick adjustments, thus limiting its effectiveness. While the school reviews its parental communications to make adjustments and updates, communications sent by teachers concerning performance and progress are not regularly

reviewed. The information presented and the format style varies from teacher to teacher, therefore limiting coherency.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Arthur W. Cunningham	UD	D	P	WD
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			X	
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			X	
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?			X	
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?				X
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
<b>Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?				X
2.2 Align assessments to curriculum, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?			X	
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students progress toward school and class expectations?				X
<b>Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?				X
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?			X	
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			X	
3.4 Communicate high expectations to staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?				X



**Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.**

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?				X
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			X	
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?			X	
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, guidance/advisement support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X

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

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?			X	
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?		X		
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?				X
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			X	

<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed