

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

I.S. 237

Junior High-Intermediate-Middle school Q237

**46-21 COLDEN STREET
QUEENS
NY 11355**

Principal: JUDITH FRIEDMAN

Dates of review: December 14, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Danielle DiMango

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

I.S. 237 is a Junior High-Intermediate-Middle school with 1205 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 9% Black, 22% Hispanic, 66% Asian students and 0% other students. The student body includes 24% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 95.3%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal makes strategic, data informed organizational decisions intended to support the work of teacher teams and further the schools instructional goals toward improved student work products. (1.3)
 - o The principal recognizes the sense of urgency as it relates to the citywide expectations and has aligned this year's instructional schedule to provide time for students to engage in the school-wide writing initiatives, for teachers to meet as teams by grade and subject area and for targeted student advisory time. Additionally, the principal has increased special education and guidance staff and resources and scheduled supplementary periods for English language learners beyond mandatory periods. As a result, the school reports an increase in student writing stamina as evidenced by evaluation and tracking of growth of student work products by the principal, the core instructional team and teachers. Additionally, teachers are engaging in inquiry work to target and support the academic and social/emotional needs of smaller cohorts of students that has led to positive academic outcomes on school report cards and an increase in attendance during advisory and targeted extended day periods school wide.
- The principal consistently uses a variety of data tools to analyze school strengths and needs and plans effectively at the school level to improve teacher effectiveness and student outcomes. (2.1)
 - o Currently the principal and school instructional team use formative and summative data tools, such as state assessments, ARIS, Acuity and student work products during their weekly meetings to identify student learning needs and monitor outcomes of instructional decisions. Through this school-wide data analysis, consistent trends revealed the need to improve student writing, vocabulary and grammatical skills. These skills have become a focus to improve student outcomes in all content areas and have led to improvements in writing style, mechanics and students ability to use details to support their writing topics as evidenced in work products from both the Drop Everything and Write school wide writing initiative and from Common Core aligned interdisciplinary writing units and tasks developed on each grade level.
 - o The school administration meets weekly to evaluate teacher feedback and observation data revealed from a formalized walkthrough template and track trends in instruction as it relates to the school's pedagogical focus. They also align this information to student work products from the common core aligned math and writing units developed this school year. These data points drive the administration's decision to revisit an instructional practice or to move forward to another instructional lens, inform their evaluation of professional development and teacher effectiveness regarding professional goals and influence organizational decisions around teaming and student schedules.
- School leaders are engaging in short, frequent observation cycles and providing feedback that focus on improving teacher practice. (4.1)
 - o The instructional foci to improve teacher effectiveness centers around instructional coherence, questioning and discussion, student engagement, assessment and improving learning environments. Each practice is addressed thorough a walkthrough cycle. Administrative feedback structures include

- collaborative professional development planning, teacher written responses to principal and assistant principals as to the relevance of administrative feedback and ways that it has helped teachers improve practice, intervisitation recommendations and feedback through administrative analysis of student work products. In addition, the leadership is working collaboratively with teacher teams around norming good practices to work toward consistency of teacher development and to improve teaching and learning. As a result of this work, there is evidence within some classrooms, such as improved questioning techniques and student discussion protocols school-wide, that demonstrates growth in the school's instructional goals.
- The school community provides guidance and advisory supports to create a respectful learning environment where students' emotional and academic development is a priority. (4.4)
 - o Currently the school has a variety of external partnerships with community organizations such as Roundabout Theater, Musical Theater, Magic Box Productions and Queens Child Guidance Center. Additionally, they are participating in a school-wide study with the University of Chicago around violence prevention. These associations enhance the school's rigorous work in the arts, the social emotional growth of their students and include support services for families to sustain community learning opportunities both during the day and after school. As a result, parents and students communicate through the school learning environment survey that they feel engaged with the school in promoting student learning.
 - o Based on data revealed through suspension reports, student report cards, attendance records and recommendations from teachers and the pupil personnel team, the school has structured advisory periods run by teachers within the school that address both the academic and social/emotional needs of students. This intense investment in guidance and curricular support for struggling learners has demonstrated a decrease in the number of suspensions and absences within the school and an increase in students meeting eighth grade standards to move on to high school.
 - The principal is an instructional leader who has communicated clear, focused goals that are based on improving student outcomes and are supported by the staff. (3.1)
 - o The school-wide, data-based goals around increasing students' argument writing and analytical, real life math skills are evident within classrooms, student work, professional development opportunities and the focus of teacher feedback by the administration. Pedagogy and school wide planning reflects alignment to these goals and has begun to change the instructional culture of the school in terms of task development and lesson planning to include learning activities aligned to the school-wide focus.
 - o Parents indicate that they take part in the needs assessment process each year that informs and monitors school wide goals. Additionally, they say that as a result of some of the school-wide initiatives developed around trends revealed in student data, they have seen growth in their children's engagement in learning and improved writing skills.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend the work in curriculum planning and task development to align rigor and higher order skills to the diversity of learners within the school. (1.1)

- o This year the school is working to better align curriculum maps to the Common Core standards and the targeted goals of the school. However, there are clear gaps within lessons and lack of rigor within the school's expectations of student work products as well as academic tasks aligned to the school-wide writing initiative. Additionally, some teachers engage in the teaching of higher order content without scaffolding that limits students' ability to fully construct an understanding of key standards within the curriculum across grades and content areas. This lack of alignment between curriculum and instruction restricts the school's ability to close instructional gaps and accelerate student learning for a variety of learners, especially English language learners and students with disabilities.
- Improve the consistency of differentiated learning and questioning activities to allow for all students, including student subgroups, to be actively engaged in their learning. (1.2)
 - o Although the school is engaging in the development of lessons and teaching strategies that demonstrate evidence of differentiated instruction and learning tasks, student data or work products aligned to rigorous standards do not consistently drive teachers' decisions in their planning of lessons or grouping of students. This inconsistent use of data to inform teaching limits teachers' ability to provide effective supports or extensions to meet the needs of the variety of learners throughout the school.
 - o In some classrooms, teacher questions and tasks are scaffolded to allow for students to articulate a clear understanding about the purpose of their work as evidenced through accountable group discussions. However, in most classrooms, questioning strategies remained at a lower level with mostly recall questions that did not ask students to analyze or synthesize information. Although the school has made a commitment to improving questioning practices, they are not embedded within all classes and there is limited evidence of the impact of this work within student work products or active student engagement in their learning, leading to uneven levels of student thinking across the school.
- Align teacher assessments and rubrics more effectively to key standards and Common Core expectations to allow for more informed instructional decisions and to address student learning needs more effectively. (2.2)
 - o Although the school has developed rubrics to assess student work as it relates to the Drop Everything and Write and argument writing initiative throughout the school, the skills, content and strategies within these rubrics do not evaluate rigor of tasks, focus in on the school's identified standards nor are they related to the school-wide curriculum maps. This lack of alignment between curriculum and assessment prevents teachers from identifying strengths and weaknesses of students and from making strategic instructional decisions to move students towards meeting key standards identified by the school and the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards.
 - o Some teachers within the school evaluate summative data, item skills analysis in ELA and Math, periodic assessments and some use classroom level data to group students. However, there are not clear systems as to how teachers use the data from these assessments to inform instruction to target the needs of students, particularly those in struggling subgroups, making it difficult for teachers to accurately gauge if their instructional decisions are positively affecting student outcomes or improving instruction.

- Increase collaboration between teachers around data and student work to set and monitor differentiated learning goals for individual and groups of students. (3.2)
 - o Teachers meet often to discuss and look at student work around the school-wide writing initiatives. However, their work lacks rigor in the ways they are using data tools to measure student learning as it relates to the curriculum. For example, school wide rubrics do not measure, grade level, standards-based skills. Additionally their work does not include organizing student-level outcome data to include underachieving subgroups as well as high achievers. Without intentionally organizing student data and using rigorous tools to measure student work products, it is difficult for the teams to set effective differentiated learning goals for their students and to measure if their goals are improving classroom practice and student outcomes.
- Establish systems to better track and monitor progress towards interim goals in order to make adjustments during the year and over time. (5.3)
 - o Although the principal has clear structures that allow for teachers to meet and discuss student outcomes and the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards, currently a gap analysis is not being conducted to bridge the gap between existing curricular expectations and those of the Common Core Standards, nor is there a consistent, rigorous protocol to evaluate quality of curriculum or student work to determine learning needs. This lack of process monitoring limits the school's ability to build capacity around curriculum needs, and, as a result, cannot effectively support student growth and mastery of the Common Core Learning Standards.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: I.S. 237	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score		X		
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<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	
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.				
<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	
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.				
<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					
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed