

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Pershing Junior High School

Intermediate School K220

**4812- 9th Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11220**

Principal: Loretta Witek

**Dates of review: March 6-7, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Karina Costantino**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Pershing Junior High School is an intermediate school with 1,352 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 2% Black, 43% Hispanic, 7% White, and 47% Asian students. The student body includes 37% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 95.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school aligns all curricula to the Common Core State Learning Standards (CCLS) in a rigorous, purposeful environment where all students become independent learners. (1.1)
 - The school maintains partnerships with Maimonides Medical Center and the Brooklyn District Attorney's office, enhancing its instructional program and providing students with a number of opportunities to explore a variety of careers in a project based learning environment. Curricula reflect the integration of the Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE) and CCLS units of study providing students with exposure to rigorous tasks. Eligible students are enrolled in a variety of offerings including math and science Regents classes, a Spanish proficiency class, the Superintendent's program in the medical sciences, an Academy of Environmental Science, and a School of Architecture and Math. The success of these programs is evidenced by the school already meeting its Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) goal of moving 30% of its targeted students two or more levels in Fountas and Pinnell reading levels.
 - The school has targeted its English language learners and allows for flexible grouping in all areas including the Welcome Class. As soon as students master the language basics they are moved into a more rigorous classroom setting to engage in academic tasks that promote higher level skills. Focusing on the four modalities of language including listening, speaking, reading and writing, teachers purposefully plan scaffolded activities. Push in and pull out support from two additional newly hired English as a second language (ESL) teachers and the use of Wordly Wise, a strong vocabulary program, move English language learners and push their thinking. This is evidenced by the decrease in the number of students scoring level one (11.8%) on the state English language arts (ELA) exam.
- The principal maintains a culture of mutual trust and respect that supports the social, academic and emotional development of all students leading to effective academic and personal behaviors. (1.4)
 - Pershing's philosophy is to instill a sense of pride in each student and their ability to become life long learners. A strong Respect for All program is embedded throughout the school promoting a safe, nurturing environment as evidenced by 90% of the parents indicating on the Learning Environment Survey that their children are safe at school. In addition, the school has a low incidence of occurrence reports. Through monthly pupil personnel team meetings and a system of peer mediation with the deans and guidance counselors, students are well known by all adults in the building. The principal is a visible presence throughout the building and personalizes her interaction with all students. Students express that they respect their teachers' willingness to help them with any issues they may have that are social or academic. The school also has a Mental Health Center in partnership with Lutheran Hospital which enables students and their families to receive immediate attention if concerns

arise. The guidance counselor plays an integral role in disseminating information related to high school admission and guides students not only through the process, but also in making career choices. Students indicate the strong support they feel as individuals allows them to strive toward their full potential. So far this year, 18 students have been accepted to specialized high schools in the current eighth grade.

- All members of the school community are involved in the creation of school improvement plans and the tracking of accountability for those plans results in accelerated student learning. (3.1)
 - The principal is a strong believer in shared leadership among staff and through this structure student progress is carefully monitored in order to make thoughtful adjustments in teacher practice across content areas to improve student achievement. This results in higher levels of student work. Results of formative and summative assessment data across grades and content areas are monitored four times a year. Teachers integrate multiple scaffolds, varied entry points and strategies to use with the high population of English language learners in order to support improved student outcomes and reach instructional targets. In one English classroom, the teacher as facilitator guided a spirited discussion with all students debating a line from a poem the students had been reading. All students were actively involved in discussing the evidence in the text that supported their understanding of the meaning of this quote. The success of these adjustments to practice is accelerated student learning evidenced by improved scores on the school's Progress Report.
 - All assessments, attendance and subject grades are put on Engrade, a computerized system, for all parents to access and note their children's progress across content areas. The School Leadership Team (SLT) is very active and plays a meaningful role in the development of the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan. Parents on the SLT feel the school and principal are transparent, always keeping parents abreast of any changes that may occur within the school, further strengthening a strong home and school connection.
- School leadership consistently communicates high expectations to all constituents resulting in a path to college and career readiness, as well as an environment of mutual accountability to reach that goal. (3.4)
 - The school organizes the year according to the Deming cycle of improvement in which they plan, assess, measure and evaluate both practice and outcomes. This cycle is completed four times a year and shared with parents. A quarterly system of assessment and evaluation guides the school's practice of teaching and learning as well as holding all staff accountable for the results. All assessment results are analyzed and disseminated to staff by the school leadership. The results are then discussed at cabinet and staff meetings with support to guide instructional decisions. All tests and tasks are aligned with the CCLS according to assessment results, with any adjustments made to learning objectives and teaching practices aligned as well. This is done collaboratively by teachers with support from the assistant principals. Departmental tests, designed by teachers are given to students to measure progress against learning objectives. The tests contain standards embedded materials and

are aligned to the next grade level in order to assist the school in determining student proficiency and preparedness toward college and career readiness. This results in a clear understanding of student and staff attainment of goals.

What the school needs to improve

- Enhance teaching strategies so that lessons strategically provide multiple entry points in order to engage all learners in high levels of thinking. (1.2)
 - Tasks are aligned to CCLS and are designed to increase student engagement, accelerate learning and provide appropriate challenges aligned to achievement levels, although these practices are not strategic in all classrooms. In one class students discussed the meaning of a phrase taken from a piece of literature, citing text based evidence, and calling on one another to build on ideas, or offer new evidence to support a different point of view. However, purposeful differentiation by the teacher was not consistently implemented to actively engage all students, thus limiting participation and higher order thinking skills in work products.
- Align grading policies with the school's key standards and further encourage student self assessment in order to better understand student strengths and needs and adjust instruction accordingly. (2.2)
 - Students are beginning to develop rubrics so they can independently self-assess work products in order to promote independence towards college and career readiness. At present, the school is using percentages and levels to grade student work. There is currently a process underway to align all grading policies to reflect the CCLS across grades, although until this is established school-wide, consistent feedback to students and teachers regarding achievement is hindered.
 - The school has common assessment practices across content areas and grades, although ongoing checks for understanding during lessons are inconsistent across classrooms. Some teachers are beginning to use assessment results to frame their questioning strategies. The lack of a clear understanding of students' learning needs from lesson to lesson results in teachers' inability to consistently make effective adjustments to instruction.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Pershing Intermediate School	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score			X				
Instructional Core							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, including the arts, physical and health education, 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 that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to curricula, engaging and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?			X				
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?		X					
School Culture							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X			
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?				X			
Systems for Improvement							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet students' learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			X				
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?				X			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework 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				
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?			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed