

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**Lew Wallace**

**Elementary-Middle School 284**

**213 Osborn Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11212**

**Principal: Keva Pitts**

**Dates of review: May 7 – 8, 2013**

**Lead Reviewer: Victoria Armas**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Lew Wallace is an elementary and middle school with 537 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 73% Black, 25% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 90.0%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school maintains a caring, safe, and respectful environment that promotes learning and supports the needs of students and adults. 1.4
  - The school's mission includes creating an academic foundation supported by a family-centered environment that includes a social and cultural sophistication leading to preparedness for college and career. The core beliefs and expectations are posted in hallways and classrooms and include arriving on time, being prepared for school, trying one's best and not giving up, which promotes a positive attitude, readiness for learning, and resilience. Each morning during the morning announcements students recite the school mantra, "I am somebody. My mind is a pearl. I can do anything. I am somebody," thus setting a respectful tone for the instructional day. Moreover, the staff motto, "We care about our students, our community, our future", is shared school-wide to close the day and reminds students that the adults in the building support their education. Furthermore, the Learning Leaders program promotes parent volunteers who assist and support the school in the cafeteria, classrooms and hallways to monitor safety. In addition, the middle school student government meets with school leaders regularly to initiate requests for change that emulates the school's respect for student voice. This group requested that boys and girls be allowed to co-mingle during lunch periods once a week based on behavior, which has improved discipline and supports students' social-emotional development.
  - At the beginning of the school year, students identified adults that could serve as a "go to" person in the event that an issue of any nature should arise that required advice or support from an adult, someone would be available to listen. The students' selections were communicated to the identified adults, as well as classroom teachers, guidance, and other school staff in the building, resulting in a coordination of efforts to align suitable help as needed. Moreover, student support groups that meet weekly called "Gents" and "Ladies of Character" further address students' social-emotional needs. In addition, an attendance team tracks student attendance and lateness to identify patterns and trends in order to coordinate outreach to families resulting in a slight improvement from last year's attendance rate currently at 90.6%.
- School leaders use frequent cycles of classroom observations to provide effective feedback to teachers coupled with targeted supports that lead to improved practice. 4.1
  - The school is affiliated with the Teacher Effectiveness pilot (TEP), which requires school leaders to conduct frequent cycles of classroom observations with post-conferencing within 24-48 hours of the visit, and includes the articulation of teacher strengths, challenges, and next steps to support teacher development. School leaders use a template for capturing evidence during classroom observations that is aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching (FfT) thus providing coherence throughout the process. Additionally, classroom observation reports are

maintained on the New York City (NYC) Achievement Reporting and Innovation System (ARIS), allowing for access by all pedagogues and school leaders and resulting in the transparency of evidence and feedback. Furthermore, teachers articulate goals aligned to the competencies from the FfT, as well as self-assess their teaching to provide a basis for developing their instructional practice throughout the school year. New teachers are provided with a mentor and are supported by the work of teacher teams and the school's instructional leads. As a result of the school's focused observation process and supports provided to teachers, the staff competency in the effective category of the FfT has increased from September to April of this year by 23%.

- The school has identified focused competencies from the FfT including 1e: planning coherent instruction, and 3b: questioning and discussion techniques as topics of professional development in order to promote teacher understanding of the areas needing improvement according to data collected from classroom observations. Additionally based on individual areas for improvement as noted in classroom observation data, individual action plans to advance instructional practice are developed collaboratively between each teacher and school leaders. Next steps articulated in action plans include: viewing video clips on the NYC Common Core library, participating in inter-visitations, attending professional development and workshops, receiving support from consultants from the Center for Improving Teacher Effectiveness (CITE) and instructional leads, and engaging in collaborative learning walks, all of which result in targeted supports aligned to specific teacher needs. Teacher practice is improving at the school through the collaborative efforts of school leaders and pedagogues, evidenced by observation report data for designing effective instruction (1e), and questioning and discussion techniques (3b), showing 60% and 15% increases respectively in effective ratings since the beginning of the school year.
- Teachers engage in regularly scheduled collaborative team meetings to examine student work and assessment data leading to adjustments in instruction in order to improve student outcomes. 4.2
  - School wide, the majority of teachers engage in common planning that is programmed at least once a week, with some teachers voluntarily meeting more often to collaboratively plan lessons based on student work. Middle school teachers meet by content area across grades as well as by grade level to discuss student progress and develop curriculum. Meeting times have been scheduled adjacent to teacher lunch periods, when possible, to provide more time to collaborate, if desired. The third grade teacher team engaged in a gap analysis protocol to identify students for grouping relative to high, medium, or low, as it related to their level of understanding in the skill of citing textual evidence to support key ideas and details. Teachers indicated that support and feedback from one another, "help us to grow", as they add ideas to the instructional strategies being considered to increase student mastery of goals.
  - Teacher teams analyze assessment data from Acuity, Early Childhood Literacy Assessment System (ECLAS), New York State English as a Second language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT), New York State (NYS) English language arts (ELA) and math exams, common grade level

assessments, and performance tasks, as well as classroom level data to plan instruction and develop curriculum with a focus on sub-group populations. In addition, teachers of better performing classes, as evidenced by assessment data, share best practices during team meetings, supporting improved teacher practice. The school's structured teacher collaborations have been noted as contributing to the improved outcomes for English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs) relative to Acuity benchmark assessments in ELA for grades 3 and 8, and in math for grades 3, 6 and 7.

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

- Develop and further integrate tasks into curriculum that provide rigor and alignment to the CCLS to support learning by all students. 1.1
  - The curricula in use at the school consist of published instructional materials from Pearson Math and Literacy, Harcourt, and Everyday Math, coupled with NYC Common Core bundles for performance tasks that are integrated into units according to themes and are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards. The school has identified some key standards aligned to the Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE) that includes supporting ideas through the use of textual evidence in ELA and fluency in math. However, the curricular artifacts and discussions with teachers and school leaders did not provide clear evidence that the selected key standards were sufficiently aligned to the needs of students. In addition, the integration of tasks into the curriculum as a meaningful sequence of learning experiences varied, thus hindering the school's ability to address needed skills and close the achievement gap.
  - Teachers collaboratively plan lessons that include strategies and instructional approaches for groups of students in an effort to meet learning needs. Although teacher teams examine student work and data to adapt instruction, minimal evidence of refinements to curriculum was noted, and modifications to instruction were often general in nature for tiered groups of students. Although questioning and the use of graphic organizers are included in the planning, it is inconsistent across the grades and subjects, thus limiting all learners from being challenged and engaged.
- Extend teachers' capacity to consistently provide strategies that support multiple entry points so that all learners are engaged in meaningful work that further promotes student progress. 1.2
  - Through the efforts of the TEP instructional practices are showing gains in implementing effective practices in the classroom and some evidenced adaptations to instruction specifically focused on the needs of sub-group populations. However this was not always present across grade levels and subject areas resulting in uneven levels of developing students' higher-order thinking skills and providing appropriately challenging tasks for a range of learners. An ELA lesson provided a bilingual student translator for a group of Spanish speaking students as well as a graphic organizer to further support student access to the learning, however this type of support was not prevalent across classrooms. During a math lesson, the teacher engaged students using a document camera projector

with manipulatives to model a strategy for creating subtraction equations, however instruction was provided to the entire class with little opportunity for students to engage with the materials on their own or in small groups, limiting participation. Whole group instruction was often observed during classroom visits hindering the school's ability to engage students in meaningful discussion in small groups or pairs, as well as appropriately differentiate learning to address students' areas of need.

- Build on current assessment practices to further an understanding of student progress toward standards in order to strategically adjust instruction. 2.2
  - Teachers utilize the data found in ARIS and classroom level assessments to group students for tiered instruction. Furthermore, teacher teams have developed school level assessments and rubrics. Additionally, the administrative cabinet analyzes data as it becomes available to identify trends, which the data specialist then shares with teacher teams and individual teachers in order to adjust instructional decisions. A school wide grading policy is in place that includes the average of tests, class work, participation, oral and written reports, and projects, and there is an alignment of number grades to letter grades and levels as reflected on NYS assessments in order to provide coherent feedback to students on progress reports and report cards. Although the school is effectively analyzing data, it is not strategically disaggregating the information sufficiently to provide actionable feedback to teachers, thus limiting their ability to tailor instruction to meet the specific learning needs of at-risk students.
  - In collaboration with teachers, students have developed individualized short- and long-term goals based on achievement data, which is noted on a template and shared with families to promote an understanding of progress. Common assessments are developed by teachers and administered, as well as interim assessments, to further determine student progress in order to adjust student goals accordingly. Although structures are in place to track progress toward goals, changes to curriculum do not sufficiently take into account students' assessment data and specific needs, thus missing out on suitable and targeted adjustment of curriculum.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: <b>Lew Wallace</b>	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>		X					
<b>Instructional Core</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, 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					
<b>School Culture</b>							
<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				
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<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 <b>inquiry approach</b> 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				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>