

# **Quality Review Report 2012-2013**

**I.S. 117 Joseph H. Wade**

**Intermediate School 09X117**

**1865 MORRIS AVENUE  
BRONX  
NY, 10453**

**Principal: DELISE JONES**

**Dates of review: April 10-11, 2013  
Lead Reviewer: Deena Abu-Lughod**

### Information about the school

I.S. 117 Joseph H. Wade is a Junior High-Intermediate-Middle school with 711 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 20.0% Black, 77.0% Hispanic, 0.0% White, and 1.0% Asian students. The student body includes 32.0% English language learners and 23.0% special education students. Boys account for 53.0% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48.0%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 89.5%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is Proficient.**

### What the school does well

- The school's focus on a set of prioritized standards and instructional shifts across the curriculum results in opportunities for all students to engage in rigorous and relevant learning opportunities. (1.1)
  - Teams of teachers worked intensively over the summer to fully integrate the school's focus literacy standards – text evidence, central idea and details, and word meaning in context – and the instructional shifts in new, vertically-aligned units that prompt high levels of thinking for all students. Each unit includes a variety of significant fiction and non-fiction texts at different levels of complexity, in addition to instructional supports, such as a menu of suitable instructional strategies, and adaptations and accommodations for English language learners and students with disabilities, along with anchor papers, graphic organizers, rubrics, and well-thought out formative and culminating assessments. Ongoing analysis of student work in relation to the instructional shifts informs adjustments to subsequent units and refinements in the supports so these better meet needs of individual students. For example, after observing challenges with citing text evidence and explaining text in their own words in one unit, these skills were embedded in daily objectives in the next unit, and a weakness in the use of transitional words, led to the creation of additional graphic organizers and sentence frames. Deliberate cross-curricular connections between social studies and English contribute to instructional coherence. For example, the current literacy units engage students in analyses of history and current events, using multiple informational texts along with fiction and poetry to invite thinking about substantive social issues, such as oppression and social justice in the Middle East, the meaning of democracy, and whether war is ever justified. In addition to substantial written work, including three drafts to ensure opportunities for revision based on teacher and peer feedback, many students are involved in Socratic seminars where they debate opposing views. The school also adopted a new math program, Math in Focus, which aligns more closely to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), focusing particularly on the major work of each grade, such as proportional relationships, ratios, and expressions and equations, and emphasizing visual models and explanations. The regular exposure of students to rich curricular materials results in high levels of cognitive engagement, references to sources, and oftentimes, considerable sophistication in written and oral expression, thus advancing college and career readiness.
- Intelligent organizational decisions ensure alignment of resources to support attainment of school-wide goals related to the improvement of pedagogy and student achievement. (1.3)
  - Resources are well aligned to support the school's clearly articulated instructional goals. Teacher programs allow them to meet for 45 minutes weekly as professional learning teams for curriculum development, where they work effectively to create instructional coherence, generate high-quality curricula that are responsive to emerging trends in student work and improve instruction through purposeful planning of high-level questions and additional supports. In addition, teachers meet 45 minutes weekly as data inquiry teams for more targeted work on a critical

subset of students who are shared across the team allowing them to detect error patterns that, as one teacher said, “jump off the page and say ‘address me now!’” Team work results in an expansion of teaching repertoires, such as asking students to rewrite comprehension questions in their own words to fully understand what the item is asking so responses are more focused. These effective team structures have ensured cross-the-board improvements in teacher practice and the quality of academic tasks.

- Student program groupings fully support efforts to accelerate student achievement. Last year, the school piloted a stand-alone English as a second language class in one grade after which all students passed the state’s English-proficiency exam. Based on that innovation’s success, similar classes were established this year in all grades, and results from Achieve3000 reveal double-digit increases in the percent of students scoring at or above 65 percent on the program’s embedded assessments from September through March as well as significant increases in Lexile levels in reading. In addition, as 95% of the students in last year’s integrated algebra class passed the Regents examination in that subject, the opportunity was extended to an additional class of English language learners this year to further improve college readiness. A new staffing arrangement for the integrated co-teaching classes, where two teachers focus on literacy and social studies and two other teachers specialize in science and math enables students to benefit from stronger content knowledge, which is reflected in higher outcomes so far this year. Afterschool opportunities further support the school’s aim to close the achievement gap. Whereas in the past, the school provided a “one size fits all” afterschool program, this year’s programs are tailored to particular needs. For example, small groups of over-aged students and high Level 2 students participate in test prep programs after school, while the highest performing students produce a magazine and work with robotics and 8th graders prepare for the specialized high school entrance exams in Saturday academies while students with interrupted formal education and other low-level readers engage in specialized literacy instruction. These strategic organizational decisions have increased the sense of accountability of each teacher for student success and the access of students to the instruction that best suits their needs.
- The school supports its ambitious instructional goals with well-implemented action plans that result in timely adjustments that accelerate student achievement. (3.1)
  - The school’s leadership team has articulated a clear vision of school improvement, with goals and action plans that thoughtfully connect students’ academic and social growth to organizational and instructional decisions and professional development. To increase student achievement, the school focuses on building literacy in all content areas, improving teachers’ content knowledge, lesson planning and lesson delivery, and inquiry to support the group of students in the school’s lowest third. Well-defined action plans reflect thorough analyses of student performance outcomes by grade, class and subgroup, and respond directly to recommendations from previous quality reviews and survey data. These plans are co-developed with teachers and communicated well to all constituencies, thus building a deep school-wide commitment to collaborative work. The core team, comprising administrators and teacher leaders, meets twice a week to monitor both

implementation and student outcomes, using a color-coded system to track performance and progress by class and subgroup on unit assessments, running records and other common assessments. Structures for supporting effective teams, including intensive professional development in this area from network and university experts, have enabled teachers to play a central role in driving improvement of the school's curricula and pedagogy. At the same time, a comprehensive professional development plan meets the needs of three tiers of teachers – those new to the profession, grade or subject area, experienced teachers, and teachers on a leadership path-- with multiple opportunities for them to gain the expertise needed to reach the next level. These opportunities include clinics on the school's selected Danielson competencies, ongoing support in Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) and Quality Teaching of English Language (QTEL) and university mentors in content areas. These actions have not only improved teacher capacity, but also served to close the achievement gap, as evidenced by over 4 points earned on the 2012-2013 Progress Report for exceptional gains amongst special populations.

- Teacher teams effectively use student work as a lens into their own practice and spearhead instructional changes that improve student learning across the school. (4.2)
  - All teachers collaborate in both cross-content grade-level data inquiry teams and in vertical curriculum development teams, sharing an understanding that the teams have a dual purpose: to increase student achievement and build teacher leadership. Teachers have deepened the summer's curriculum development efforts by continually analyzing the resulting student work. The regular use of the "surfacing the gap" protocol informs instructional adjustments for individuals and groups of students as well as adjustments to subsequent units, assessments and rubrics. Inquiry teams develop individualized action plans with interventions that are tracked for progress, and have resulted not only in gains for targeted students, but improvements in teaching strategies. Teachers are highly reflective, using student work not merely to consider strategies that may serve an individual or group of students but as a critical lens on their own practice. For example, in examining the work of a student who tended to lose his focus between the first and second drafts, the teacher asked how her feedback may have unintentionally provoked a misconception in her expectations. As a result of these meetings, teachers say "we implement changes immediately" and they have noticed improvements in student outcomes. For example, in math, because of better use of pre-tests and inclusion of open-ended questions that enable them "to look at details and redirect them", average scores on unit exams have increased by 4-20 percentage points.
  - Teachers select leaders from among their peers to serve on the main data inquiry team. As a result of this distributed leadership structure, teachers are the main drivers of instructional improvement, and are responsible for proposing many of the instructional and organizational innovations. Some successful strategies emerging from teams' action research are now school-wide practices, such as the RATS (restate, answer, text-evidence, so what) approach to short responses, while others, such as "passing notes", and "no opt out" are disseminated through a weekly bulletin that highlights a different technique each week. In team meetings, teachers pose questions that provoke deep thinking

among the presenters and result in effective changes to instruction, including new efforts to include students in the development of rubrics and supports. In describing the impact team work has made, the union leader noted that “professional development is more teacher generated. We can decide how we implement the Common Core standards so we feel we have a stake in the success.”

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

- Increase teacher capacity to deliver student-centered instruction to promote greater engagement so that all students can demonstrate their thinking in high quality work products. (1.2)
  - Teachers invest considerable effort in planning for diverse learners to ensure access of all students to the high quality curricula. Teachers preview vocabulary, show video clips to build background knowledge and reference real-life objects, such as a Ferris wheel on which a protractor is superimposed to illustrate the concept of rotation, to serve all students well, especially those learning English and those who require more concrete representations. In an exemplary social studies class, students prepared for a debate on the entry of the US into World War I by taking notes on multiple texts to glean different perspectives before defending their stance and then reflecting on and revising positions. In a math class with long term English language learners, well-established procedures facilitated group work on different tasks and presentation of solution pathways. However, in several other classes, the principal observed, despite using the same high quality materials, “the teacher did all the teaching and learning.” For example, instruction in one class of students with disabilities was over-scaffolded, leaving little room for students to think together or on their own, and in an integrated co-teaching class, the underutilization of the additional adult presence reduced their ability to impact student learning. The inconsistent use of structures to generate student-to-student interaction and discussion results in some uneven experiences with the strong curricula that inhibits efforts to ensure all students fully develop their potential to produce high quality work.
- Ensure grading policies and formative assessment practices enable all teachers to provide feedback to students that focus on the highest leverage areas to improve their performance. (2.2)
  - Teacher teams have developed and use common assessments that are well-aligned to key standards and curricula. They have also developed cross-curricular and task-specific rubrics, including some that are generated together with the students. Data from these performance-based assessments as well as formative tasks and item analyses from periodic and summative assessments are used very well to track growth and make curricular and instructional changes. In addition, students engage in both self-assessment and peer-editing to improve their work. However, teachers are not fully normed in their evaluation of student work, and the quality of feedback to students varies across classrooms, often privileging conventions over content. In addition, not all teachers use checks for understanding during the lesson to make on-the-spot adjustments when needed. As a result, there are missed opportunities for helping students to work more deliberately on their areas of need.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: I.S. 117 Joseph H. Wade	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score			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 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				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed