

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Intermediate School 339

Middle School

1600 WEBSTER AVENUE

**BRONX
NY 10457**

Principal: Kim S. Outerbridge

Dates of review: January 30, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Dolores Esposito

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Intermediate school 339 is a middle school with 740 students from grade six through grade 8th. The school population comprises 31% Black, 67% Hispanic, 0.0% White, and 1.0% Asian students. The student body includes 32% English language learners and 23% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 89%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has utilized a variety of structures to cultivate a highly supportive and inclusive culture that positively and significantly impacts the academic and personal development of staff and students. (1.4)
 - Students and parents describe the principal as “very visible”, “approachable” and “caring”. “Failure is not an Option,” is the belief that permeates from students, teachers, parents and staff so there is a school-wide approach to support students with social emotional learning and academics. For example, announcements and quotes in the morning and afternoon inspire students to work hard and do their best every day. These announcements include music that students enjoy during transitions. Parents state that they are very enthusiastic about the additional support that students receive from their teachers during the 37.5 minutes and the Saturday Academy, which provide tutoring in literacy and mathematics. Students also state that many teachers stay after class to give them extra help, when they are stuck and do not understand the work, or need to talk about social issues or personal challenges. Guidance counselors, deans, social workers, and Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention Specialists (SAPIS) communicate regularly, as they target students at risk, with specific attention to attendance monitoring and outreach to parents, to insure improved academic performance. Support staff members also connect with students on weekends, since some of them live in the community. There is a Young Men’s group that meets regularly to discuss issues of concern around student leadership, tolerance, problem solving skills and college goals. In addition, the student council organizes assemblies, including one on bullying, where students role play different scenarios to encourage peers to adopt positive behaviors. Many students indicate that this helps them to discuss their feelings and learn conflict resolution strategies. The “Respect for All” team focuses on life skills and academics. For example, they have done assemblies on Anti-Bullying and College Readiness. These initiatives support the development of the whole child and enhance student learning. As a result, attendance for students has improved from 88% to 90%, online occurrence reports reflect a 96.5% decline in incidents of misconduct and, “The tone of the building has also improved significantly”, according to parents, students and staff. A review of formative writing assessments in the various content areas also show academic growth based on the rubrics used to assess progress, and most teachers report that students have improved in their use of text based evidence to support their claims.
- The school strategically uses resources that align to the school’s goals, resulting in meaningful student work products. (1.3)
 - Resources have been thoughtfully aligned to the school’s goals and focus on raising the academic standards for all students. For example, three coaches have been hired to support teachers in literacy and mathematics. Mentors and lead teachers are also available to provide targeted

assistance to teachers to improve their pedagogy. During classroom visits, teachers use Smart Boards to engage students in their learning. Teachers of students with disabilities indicate that this resource assists them with their teaching. Students in these classrooms are eager and excited about the content that they are learning. There is a clear focus on Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) in lesson plans and units across classrooms and staff and student time is carefully organized to provide teachers with various planning opportunities to meet the needs of all subgroups. Classrooms with English language learners have been organized to target language needs and supports. The school has added additional staff to support the work with students with disabilities. Consequently, student work samples on bulletin boards show high quality work that reflects the shifts in literacy and math.

- Teachers are afforded the opportunity to meet several times during the week by grade and content. During these times, they review data, plan lesson units and review student work. For example, English as a Second Language teachers have partnered with CUNY - The New York State Initiative for Emergent Bilinguals to learn strategies such as translanguaging, a strategy aimed at providing support for second language learners by integrating their native language as needed during lessons. These strategies are shared during team meetings and support teachers during their planning sessions. Teachers also plan with their colleagues and administrators on Fridays after school, making good use of new resources in the school, such as the Rosetta Stone program for English language development and System 44 that supports beginning English language learners. Changes in the schedule and programming this year have also helped the school to meet the requirements for native language instruction and provide a rich language experience for English language learners. All students and subgroups are exposed to CCLS aligned units of study that incorporate skills such as annotation skills in mathematics, social studies, science and literacy, to support learning across content areas. A review of students' notebooks and work samples showed that students use these skills across the grades. These practices and resources assist students in their learning, with students engaging in challenging tasks that require higher order thinking across content areas and participating in discussions through Socratic Seminars.
- Across classrooms, teachers align assessments to curricula in order to make effective instructional adjustments that support student learning. (2.2)
 - During grade meetings teachers develop assessments that are aligned to the CCLS across content areas. They use protocols and common rubrics to analyze data and review student work. For example, in English language arts they use Acuity assessments, running records and end of unit assessments to analyze specific skills and determine gaps in student learning. This process of data analysis is used in all content areas to evaluate student progress towards goals. Teachers develop lessons that incorporate questioning techniques and visuals as tools that strengthen assessment and improve teaching practices. These practices include the use of Socratic Seminars in science and social studies. Teachers analyze various data points and make decisions to adjust and target key areas during mini-lessons and during small group instruction. As a result, across content areas, teachers provide students with actionable feedback on

their work, which in turn promotes student reflection and improves the quality of students' writing. This improvement is noted on progress reports given to students and parents throughout the year, as well as in administrative reviews of student work.

- School leaders support teacher development through frequent cycles of classroom observation that promote reflection and growth. (4.1)
 - Teachers receive extensive feedback from frequent observations, both formal and informal, with specific strategies to improve teaching practices, based on a research based common teaching framework. Using this framework, school leaders provide targeted professional development around key areas such as classroom environment, collaborative inquiry, planning, assessments and writing strategies, to support teachers' work with the CCLS. This support is planned collaboratively between staff and administration, based on ongoing reviews of student work and daily teacher performance. A review of observations and feedback forms reveals that school leaders provide actionable feedback, including next steps, to teachers in order to improve their practice in the areas mentioned above. New teachers receive additional support from mentors, coaches and network staff, who help them to plan lessons that incorporate content and processes that support the CCLS and provide visual supports to students to encourage academic language development. This reflects the school's focus on the subgroups, especially the large number of English language learners in the school. In addition, as a result of focused professional development activities, across classrooms the learning environments reflect the current units of studies and the coherent expectations around process and criteria charts that match the current units and support students in their learning. Students can explain the purpose of the charts in their classrooms and use them to guide and revise their work. As a result, administrative feedback during planning sessions is based on classroom visits and supports teachers with planning that promotes reflection and builds a common language around effective practices that result in teacher growth. One would not know the difference between new and seasoned teachers because of the strong collaboration and partnerships cultivated among staff, as they engage in professional development activities.

What the school needs to improve

- Further develop curricula by incorporating more academic tasks that enable students to demonstrate critical thinking skills and effectively close the achievement gap. (1.1)
 - The school leadership and staff work very hard during the school day, after school and during the summer to align curriculum units and tasks to the CCLS in all content areas. This process is led by teachers who work closely with administration to ensure that there is coherence across grades and subjects. Each administrator is responsible for a content area and team. For example, the principal leads the English language arts team and supports the teacher facilitator with resources and tools for implementing the CCLS shifts. Teachers develop CCLS aligned units of study and use rubrics that focus on argumentative writing. These documents are shared

on Googledocs, with performance indicators and assessments that incorporate higher order thinking skills and reflect student progress, based on the writing samples reviewed by the principal, and formative assessments that were shared during the review. All student work in the hallways reflects the shifts in all content areas and curricula and academic tasks emphasize higher order thinking skills across grades. There is progress evident in student work samples and student performance, based on the NYS assessments in literacy and math, and students engage in tasks that align to the CCLS. However, some tasks are not complex enough to cognitively engage all students during instruction, as some students struggle and require extensive support, while others complete tasks quickly and are ready for more challenging work. Therefore, there are uneven levels of cognitive engagement, with tasks that do not effectively meet all students' academic needs.

- Expand the depth of pedagogy to consistently provide high quality supports that foster student independence, leading to rigorous learning. (1.2)
 - The school follows a workshop model that includes a mini- lesson, guided practice and independent practice in all content areas. There have been extensive conversations with all constituents about making sure that there is explicit teaching, including modeling for students across the school, based on the CCLS. For example, teachers model strategies for students and scaffold content during mini lessons, but during the “You Do” or practice time, some students finish tasks very fast, while others need more explicit guidance and struggle to complete the task. In some classrooms lessons provide guiding questions for the task or multiple examples or exemplars for students, enhancing engagement, especially for English language learners and students with disabilities, who comprise a large percent of the school’s population. However, while one teacher uses Socratic Seminars to effectively engage students in rigorous, meaningful and content rich conversations in science, in other classrooms students are attentive and responsive, but not consistently engaged in discussions or written work that reflect high levels of thinking and learning. Similarly, some teachers spend a lot of time modeling and explaining the “Do Now” and “Aim”, leaving students with little time to practice the strategies taught during the lesson. One student stated, “I want to just do the work already and not spend so much time reviewing the task in the Do Now”. Thus, even though tasks are aligned to the CCLS and focus on content that is grade level appropriate, there are insufficient teaching supports to extend student learning and build higher order thinking skills. As a result, across classrooms there are uneven levels of engagement of students in challenging tasks that foster deep thinking and independence by all learners.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Intermediate School 339	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