

# Quality Review Report 2013-2014

**The Charles O. Dewey School**

**Middle School K136**

**4004 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11232**

**Principal: Eric Sackler**

**Dates of review: October 30-31, 2013**

**Lead Reviewer: Anita Skop**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Charles O. Dewey School is a middle school with 486 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 2% Black, 86% Hispanic, 6% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 38% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 92.5%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school reflectively and strategically aligns instruction and adjusts the Common Core aligned curriculum to target the needs of the diverse population, creating instructional coherence across grade levels and content areas.
  - After collaborative discussion with the staff, analysis of the needs of students and review of the materials available, the school purchased Expeditionary Learning and CMP Math for all grades, ensuring that instruction is aligned to the citywide expectations and the rigors of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). However, in order to ensure that the school's large English language learner and special needs populations are supported, the program has been adjusted so that academic tasks are embedded in a meaningful way for all students. Teachers reference guidebooks that though only a few weeks old, are highlighted and post-it filled, modifying instruction to meet student needs. For example, reflecting on student work and benchmarking tasks, a strong vocabulary development component has been added as a pre-teaching tool, and complex text is often "jigsawed" into smaller chunks so that students gradually develop the requisite stamina and "close reading" skills. Further, the pacing of lessons is routinely adjusted to ensure that student mastery is prioritized. As a result all students are engaged in challenging tasks that require higher order thinking.
- The school-wide use of a targeted instructional model, and strong scaffolded supports, embed language development and provide multiple entry points, enabling all students to access rigorous learning.
  - The school is committed to a vision of all students as empowered learners, in keeping with the Danielson Framework aligned instructional shifts. Reflecting upon the needs of the school's students, the majority of whom are English language learners (ELLs) or former ELLs, the school has aligned the curriculum to incorporate the use of the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) which requires teachers to include language supports when planning all content area instruction. Visual representations, hands-on, real world materials, consistent routines and the use of word walls and native language glossaries, provide students with the means to begin to take ownership of learning from their earliest days as newcomers. In one math class, students in the country only one or two months worked in a group to create a graph using manipulatives and took their first steps as participants in a class discussion. Additionally, the use of technology in both a computer lab, and within classrooms provides a further method of individualizing targeted student support, as does the extensive use of art as a means of communicating early understanding. Consequently, students use a vast array of multiple entry points across all curriculum areas and are able to grasp demanding concepts and create meaningful work products that demonstrate their thinking using various media.

- The principal prioritizes all organizational, budgetary and personnel decisions to address the instructional goals of the school, which are well focused and deeply aligned to the school's data-defined needs.
  - Cognizant of the need to support students in facing the requirements of twenty-first century college and career readiness, and equally aware of the need to provide individualized supports for all learners, the principal has made the use of technology a real priority at the school. All classrooms have and consistently use smart boards, document projectors and laptops. (This is evidenced by the facility with which students share information and strategies with their classmates using these tools.) In addition, a state of the art computer lab, funded through a grant, enables students to create their own blogs and websites while monitored by a multi-screen image on the teacher's computer. Further, a full time technology support person provides aid school-wide so that service issues do not impact student or staff use. This commitment, coupled with the use of technology-based data files and parent/student accessible grading systems aligns with the goals of greater student ownership of learning, as well as improved student and teacher practice and student engagement, through the use of technology.
  - The school leader, well aware of the data defined needs of his large special education population, has revamped the instructional model at his school. By departmentalizing instruction for all self-contained students, he has ensured that they benefit from newly hired instructional specialists, who have strong content knowledge. As a result, all students with Individual Educational Plans now work with a special education teacher and a content teacher, who plan together to meet the needs of these fragile students, providing greater levels of content mastery, as measured by rubric assessed student writing, unit tests and in-class use of academic language during content area discussions.
- Cohesive and highly collaborative teacher teams thoughtfully evaluate student work and align teacher practice to address identified needs, resulting in student progress and improved teacher pedagogy.
  - Teacher teams include all teachers and consistently reflect inquiry based practices that require teachers to reflect on the needs of their students and the impact of their practice. A school based option enables teachers to meet every Tuesday afternoon. These meetings alternate between grade and departmental meetings, ensuring that each team meets minimally bi-monthly. These meetings coupled with monthly full faculty conferences, and per session and voluntary programmatic meetings have resulted in strong, consistently collaborative teams across all content areas that have changed the culture of the building. Teachers now voluntarily meet to deepen their learning and comment that they must actively participate in professional development, "because I do not want to let my colleagues down." Accordingly, teacher practice is deeply aligned to the CCLS and has led to instructional shifts such as the universal use of the SIOP model, positively impacting student success.
  - Grade level teacher teams routinely target teacher practice to improve student achievement through ongoing analysis of student work for the students that they share. They reflect on the strategies that have shown

success by sharing them with the team once the problem has been identified. As a result of these collaborative practices, the use of “accountable talk” strategies has been transferred from English language arts to all content areas, raising the level of student discourse and comprehension school-wide.

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

- Deepen the consistency of tracking student mastery, so that all students are aware of actionable feedback in all content areas.
  - Across the school, teachers consistently utilize Common Core aligned tasks and assessments at the grade and department level. In addition, the school reflectively dissects both the state summative assessments and the NYSESLAT assessment for ELLs, determining trends and identifying student needs. Throughout the year the school also administers monthly assessments in English language arts and math to measure student growth towards goals. This data is then transparently tracked online using an electronic protocol that enables all teachers to reflect on their students’ progress across subject areas. Rubric assessed writing assignments and tasks are also used to track growth, and actionable feedback is regularly provided to students in English language arts and math during teacher conferences, and through written comments. Further many teachers routinely use exit slips and collect student work daily as checks for understanding. However, this level of ongoing assessment with clearly defined feedback is not yet as fully developed in all content area classes. Consequently, not all students have an in-depth understanding of their next steps in these areas, limiting their ability to improve achievement.
- Formalize the protocol for tracking professional development so that teacher growth can be monitored and evaluated to enhance pedagogic practice.
  - As the head of a pilot school for the use of the Danielson Framework, the school leader is committed to the work around these expectations. He and his assistant principals have worked with the staff to ensure that the requirements of the evaluation process are transparent and well defined. Individual conferences have been conducted and teacher goals discussed and collaboratively defined. The cycle of informal observations provides feedback to teachers, which clearly defines their next steps and the supports available to help them reach their goals. As a result, teachers express an understanding of this process. Additionally, the school utilizes electronic tracking protocols for student achievement and aligns this data to teacher evaluation during ongoing discussions. Further, professional development, provided by the school has shown true success. Several teachers have shown dramatic improvements in their pedagogy, leading to achievement of tenure. However, a system for recording professional development recommendations and tracking the progress of teachers based on their targeted professional development supports, which ensures that there is consistent follow up between administrators over time is not yet fully in place. As a result, targeted support can sometimes be fragmented, limiting instructional growth and pedagogical coherence.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The Charles O. Dewey School	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 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards?				X
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the 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 supports 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 those expectations?			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 student 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 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection?			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?			<b>X</b>	
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<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>