



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Quality Review
Office of School Quality
Division of Academics, Performance, and Support
2013-2014**

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Irwin Altman Middle School

26Q172

**81-14 257 Street
Queens
NY 11004**

Principal: Jeffrey Slivko

Dates of review: November 12-13, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Anita E. Saunders:

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Irwin Altman is a middle school with 974 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 11% Black, 15% Hispanic, 16% White, and 58% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 96%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and staff regularly use a wide range of data and demonstrate a clear understanding of the performance progress of individuals thereby effectively informing instruction and organizational adjustments. (2.2)
 - The schools' overarching data system is Datacation, a website system that compiles a variety of data and shows trends across classes and subjects. Teachers use this system to post class assessments and conference notes. Additionally, the school uses New York State English Language Arts and Math Assessments, System to Achieve Results for Students (STARS) reading assessments, Accelerated Reader Book Finder lexile level assessment, pre and post Connected Mathematics Program 3 (CMP3) math assessments, Code X English language arts assessments, Periodic Baseline Assessments, English language learner Writing Reading Assessment Program (WRAP) and formative assessments in all subjects. These robust assessments are Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) aligned and used in conjunction with Item Analysis skills data. All data is continuously analyzed to plan appropriate instruction for all students. The principal and assistant principals (APs) are able to click on to Datacation for student assessments, note student needs and growth, and use this data when observing students and instruction to ensure appropriate curriculum and instruction. Teachers further use the analysis of this data to make curriculum modifications and adjustments. For example: teachers who analyzed CODE X concluded that students had difficulty in understanding the wording in questions, metaphors, citing evidence, author's point of view, interaction between story elements and events, and the relationship of a sentence with the text. Additionally, CMP3 results revealed problems with transformations. Therefore, the English language arts team plans to revise the mentor text which uses central idea and theme as synonymous, and planned to re-teach the topic of using evidence from the text supported by quotes and sentence elaboration. The math team planned to incorporate transformations into a real life task such as redesigning a room. In addition to standardized assessments, rubrics are also analyzed for coherence with the CCLS expectations and grading. This ongoing data analysis and planning has led to an average gain of +31 scale score points in the StAR post assessment, a +52 scale score reading gain for self-contained special education classes and a +45 scale score reading gain for Instructional Co-Teaching (ICT) classes.
- School leaders promote teacher professional growth and reflection with effective feedback grounded in the Danielson rubric leading to improved school wide instructional practices. (4.1)
 - The principal believes adults learn best when they are provided clear expectations, have opportunities to self-assess, observe modeling by others, and are encouraged to take risks with new methods. These actions, he believes, foster trust, empower teachers and change behaviors. The vast majority of teachers have been observed formally or through unannounced mini observations. Verbal feedback occurs within the same or next day where teachers are asked to self assess and then

hear the principal share his low inference notes. The teachers in collaboration with the principal discuss changes necessary and plan professional development. Through analyzing teacher observation and student level assessment data the school identified that teachers need support in planning and preparation with higher level questions, and facilitating student to student discussions.

- Teachers have been provided with professional development for the Danielson, “A Framework for Teaching” rubric noting the specific differences between developing, effective and highly effective. The principal gives positive feedback with specific suggestions. For example, an instructor needed to include student self reflection and have higher expectations in student writing using a more rigorous rubric. The principal gave her very specific suggestions. Another teacher was effective using multiple texts of different lexiles, as well as in providing differentiated homework; her feedback additionally was very targeted and specific to foster growth, challenge and support. Furthermore, teachers establish goals in their individual planning conferences and the principal is intentional about giving feedback to teachers in alignment and support of these goals resulting in clear expectations for staff and an improved quality of student work.
- The principal’s strategic leadership promotes organizational decisions that support instructional goals to continuously improve student outcomes and result in student progress. (1.3)
 - Department level teacher teams meet one to two times a week; vertical team meetings are scheduled with one to two representatives per department participating to ensure CCLS aligned curriculum coherence across grades and departments. The principal observes teacher teams and instruction for teacher strengths and makes recommendations regarding staff schedules and instructional placements. For example, the principal noted staff with expertise of English language learners and Students with Disabilities (SWDs) instructional strategies and placed five students in each of these teachers’ classes to improve instructional learning. The principal also scheduled the English as a Second Language (ESL) and Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS) teachers to push in for small group instruction. The principal collaborates with the elementary school principals for class placement recommendations as well as schedules the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) Teacher Center staff member to teach two English language arts classes and provide coaching to new teachers. Additionally, the principal has hired eight new staff members, three brand new and five experienced. These practices, in addition to the principals hiring strategies, helped to close the achievement gap by 2.6 points from 3.2 to 5.8 on the latest progress report. Lastly, due to strategic teacher placements, teachers have the ability to meet over time in teacher teams and discuss student progress, needs and interventions including instructional strategies resulting in a commitment to the progress of all students.
- The school maintains a supportive learning environment and has high expectations for learning and behavior that are shared with parents and students leading to academic and personal gains for students. (1.4)

- The school is safe and has numerous social-emotional programs such as: Anti bullying by the New York Police Department/Office of School and Youth Development (NYPD/OFYD) Peer Mediation, SAYA (South Asian Youth Association) Anti-Defamation League “No Place for Hate”, Global Partners Jr., Read for the Record with PS 115, Jazz for Young People, and Rising Stars, a monthly citizenship/values program emphasizing responsibility, perseverance and leadership. Mail boxes on each floor enable students to submit ideas and are collected by the dean as student feedback. The Student Organization composed of a representative from each class, meet once a month with the principal to plan together and make decisions in the school. Students have asked for more dances, more sports programs, annual school shows, and more vegetarian sandwiches. As a result, the school has received the Cooperative Healthy Active Motivated and Positive Students (CHAMPS) sports program and school lunches now include more vegetarian choices, non meat and meat sandwiches, and bagels and cream cheese, .Annual school shows are produced and included “Annie” last year and currently “Into the Woods” enabling students to showcase their talents in the arts. These actions have reinforced the school’s value of ensuring that student voice is included and guides the school decision making and planning process.
- The guidance counselor has provided professional development for staff with anti-bullying, suicide prevention and multicultural awareness workshops thus far this year. The school hosts a Spring Honors Dessert Evening to honor student achievement and attendance; A Physical Education Night (parents and students), a Science Fair; and a ROAD program for anti-diabetes. Family outreach also includes a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) Book Club meeting once a month, PTA School Sports, High School Articulation and grade 6 Parent Orientation workshops. These programs have increased student attendance to 97%. Additionally students have adopted socialization skills, experienced enhanced emotional well-being, and hold a greater understanding of the diverse population.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen the alignment of curricula to the CCLS and the instructional shifts to offer meaningful, rigorous learning experiences and improve student achievement for all students. (1.1)
 - Although teacher teams are meeting regularly, looking at student work, curricula and instruction as related to the CCLS and the instructional shifts, grading, rigor and coherence in units of study for SWD and English language learner students reflected in pacing charts and curriculum documents across all grades and subject areas were not evident in promoting college and career readiness for all students. Furthermore higher order thinking was not consistently emphasized across all subjects and grades resulting in fewer opportunities for students to demonstrate their thinking.

- Continue to provide multiple opportunities for meaningful engagement with classroom instruction that motivates all students to reach their highest potential with high level thinking and work products. (1.2)

Across classrooms instructional practices are informed by a common set of school beliefs about how students learn best. For example, aligned to the Danielson Framework, the school believes that students learn best when they are provided extended time to practice and engage in discussions as well as justify thinking. Although teachers were observed using these practices in addition to higher level Depth of Knowledge (DOK) questions, and serving as a facilitator in student discussions, these practices were not consistently evident to the same extent across all classrooms. Additionally, multiple entry points into curricula, including the use of an article in the student's native language, as well as differentiated class and homework assignments to support English language learners and challenge the highest achieving students were observed in classrooms. Some classrooms included high quality extensions and supports however overall the use of high quality extensions and supports for English language learners and Students with disabilities were not as prominent, in all classrooms, resulting in fewer opportunities for students to engage in challenging tasks.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Irwin Altman Middle School 172	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 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			
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 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				
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 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?			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed