



Quality Review Report 2013-2014

**I.S. 237
Intermediate School 237**

**46-21 COLDEN STREET
QUEENS
NY, 11355**

Principal: JUDITH FRIEDMAN

**Dates of review: Oct 28-29, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Danielle DiMango**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

I.S. 237 is an Intermediate school with 1224 students from 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 7% Black, 21% Hispanic, 3% White, and 69% Asian students. The student body includes 21% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 95.1%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has implemented curriculum and tasks within and across grades aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and the instructional shifts that support college and career readiness for all learners. (1.1)
 - The school has engaged in a two year curricular study and developed and fully implemented rigorous units of study and tasks in all content areas that embed key instructional shifts to promote higher order thinking. Curricula design includes the integration of the school wide initiative, Writing And/ or Verbal Evidence (W.A.V.E) which addresses the expectations of using text based answers in writing tasks and discussion practices. Content area units of study include a balance of both fiction and nonfiction text which scaffold to increased nonfiction reading and writing tasks by grade eight. All units are supported by essential and guiding questions that focus on a central theme. In math, teachers and administration developed instructional units based on modules from Engage NY. Tasks include multi step problems that command use of application and deep understanding of concepts. Each math unit contains a summary of materials needed for design and implementation, content vocabulary, overarching concepts/connections, essential questions, CCLS alignment, standards for practice, instructional shifts, assessments and learning plan/activities. As a result of this well-structured instructional framework, students are mastering higher level literacy and math skills placing them on the path of college and career readiness and curricula coherence is evident within and across grades as evidenced in the consistent increases in student median adjusted growth percentile placing the school in the top quartile in English language arts and math when compared to the progress of middle schools citywide and within the school's peer grouping.
 - Teacher teams and administration work closely with staff developers to ensure access to rigorous text and content for all learners. Teachers use IXL and Achieve 3000 with English language learners and students with disabilities to support scaffolds and increase complexity of grade level text, transferable vocabulary skills and coherence and fluency in math which is also aligned to the units of study. Additionally, Teachers College, the school's literacy model, supports teachers in the infusion of skills and task writing that intentionally nurtures fluency and stamina for struggling writers. For example, in order to support students in the implementation of W.A.V.E. and completion of common core tasks, reference sheets, rubrics and other instructional tools are written in languages other than English and used in all content areas. Finally, in order to provide extended opportunities for advanced learners, curricula in all content areas includes above grade level text supported with close reading strategies and students are offered both Earth Science and Living Environment regents classes as well as Integrated Algebra. This year, the school has been able to increase the number of students taking regents classes and English language learners and students scoring in the lowest one third citywide showed an average of twenty percent gain in English language arts.
- The principal strategically and effectively utilizes resources and makes organizational decisions to support school wide instructional goals and the learning needs of students. (1.3)

- In support of the schools wide instructional goals and the school W.A.V.E. initiative around improving literacy skills, the principal has formed partnerships with Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, Roundabout Theater, New York Historical Society, Young Debaters Program and Urban Advantage. Students are scheduled for arts programs a minimum of three times per week. Additionally, the principal has hired additional teachers with special education and English as a Second language licenses in order to reduce some class sizes and to allow for flexible scheduling of both teachers and students. For example, all special education teachers are scheduled for a variety of classes to ensure these teachers are consistently exposed to the development and implementation of challenging tasks aligned to the expectations of the common core learning standards. These teachers are then able to work more effectively with their students and plan with colleagues during weekly meetings regarding supports that provide opportunities for increased cognitive engagement in tasks. Additionally, English language arts teachers plan with and push into second language classes to further implement English language arts skills and strategies. General education and special education classes are paralleled to allow for both least restrictive environment and interventions when necessary. As a result of these intentional administrative and strategic hiring decisions, student writing using supporting evidence and appropriate research has improved in all content areas, including math, and students are able to effectively apply their learning to academic and career expectations reducing achievement gaps within the school.
- The principal has fully communicated and implemented a plan of action that includes clear instructional goals and action plans that target the integration of the common core learning standards leading to increased student progress. (3.1)
 - The principal analyzes a variety of data sources such as state testing data, class/grade scholarship reports, unit pre and post assessment data by grade and content and observation data reports aligned to Danielson domains to track teacher and student progress along the continuum of the multi-year change strategy that began two years ago designed to improve student outcomes. This year, school goals include a commitment to increasing student progress in English language arts, refining curricula in core subjects to include alignment to the CCLS and improving learning outcomes for student subgroups. School wide data is tracked quarterly and the administration and teacher teams engage in curricula and instructional revisions based on data revealed from student work products. Additionally the principal plans for next steps in terms of professional development for teachers and use of resources based on this school wide monitoring model. An example of this collaborative process includes the schools writing program. It began with school wide writing goal, Drop Everything and Write (D.E.W) based on argumentative writing in 2010 and transitioned over a two year period through support of Teachers College and analysis of student work to include the W.A.V.E initiative. This scaffold was based on student trends that revealed the need to focus on increased use of complex informational text, writing from sources and focusing on using relevant text based evidence to support claims. Through monitoring of student work products and passing rates in core subjects, the school's progress report results and data revealed, the principal is able design and provide professional development scaffolds by content and teacher capacity aligned to school goals. As a result of this triangulation of goals to student outcomes and teacher effectiveness, there is a clear understanding of student

expectations, monitoring of progress and instructional strategies that have improved outcomes for all learners.

- Thoughtful rubric aligned observation and feedback systems support professional growth and has elevated pedagogy and teacher reflection of their practice throughout the school. (4.1)
 - The school administration has calibrated their understanding and alignment of instructional practice to the Domains of the Danielson Framework for Teaching and is providing attuned feedback to teachers around instructional practice. Teachers engage in feedback sessions with administrators and receive a rationale relating to their practice directly aligned to the framework, as well as, next steps, aligned to professional goals which include an example of teacher practice, an instructional strategy to apply and a timeframe for when an administrator will return to observe teacher progress. As a result of this cohesive system, teachers are applying instructional skills that support the implementation of the CCLS and there is evidence of changes in instructional practices, such as increased opportunities for peer discussion, directly related to teacher feedback.
 - The principal has designed a structured observation and feedback system that directly informs professional development for teachers aligned to the Danielson Framework. She carefully tracks teacher strengths and areas for improvement and then looks closely at student work products and rubrics to monitor the effectiveness of feedback to student learning outcomes. An example of this work focused around trends revealed relating to domain 3D, using assessments in instruction. It specifically focused around teacher to student feedback. Professional development was provided around this domain and the principal reviewed samples of teacher feedback and evaluated student work to monitor that feedback was appropriate, understood and applied to future student work products. This effective system of observation, evaluation and strategic support for staff members is leading to improved teacher instructional practice, elevation of teacher leadership/mentoring roles and model classroom sites and is aligned to the learning needs of students throughout the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Further support the alignment of teacher pedagogy and instructional decision-making to the demands of the curricula and provide purposeful access points to maximize student engagement and participation in their learning. (1.2)
 - It is a school wide expectation that students develop skills using evidence to support claims in both written and verbal expression and this practice is consistent within and across grades and content areas. Additionally, across classrooms scaffolds, such as translated readings, tiered direction sheets with visual cues, graphic organizers and paper choices with acronyms that provide key skills and direction around a task are evident and support critical thinking to allow for more meaningful work products. For example, in one English language arts classroom, the teacher had structured worksheets around character analysis that required students to use supporting text based evidence contributing to higher levels of understanding and thinking for struggling learners. Additionally, in a math class with a large English language learner population, the teacher used multiple scaffolds such as translated tasks, technology and specific grouping that yielded positive outcomes for these students around work habits and math fluency and required all

students to justify their answers using content vocabulary. However, at this time, teachers and students are engaged in a productive struggle around alignment of advanced instructional strategies to complement the rigor of the curriculum. Particular attention is being exercised in the area of literacy as teachers grapple to engage in building upon higher order questioning and effective use of materials and scaffolds necessary to bring students to planned instructional outcomes, and higher levels of understanding demanded within the curricula so that all students and subgroups are invested in high levels of thinking and ownership of their learning.

- Deepen assessment practices and feedback to students comprising clear next steps, student self-assessments and checks for understanding, so teachers make instructional adjustments and students clearly know their learning needs. (2.2)
 - The school uses pre and post assessments for each unit of study in all content areas to measure student progress within the framework of the CCLS. Additionally, all rubrics measure student understanding and application of the school wide instructional focus and provide opportunities for teacher feedback and student reflection. Although school rubrics define quality and provide students with awareness of expectations and how teachers will evaluate their work, at this time, students are mimicking the language of the rubric and teacher feedback indeterminate of the level of student understanding of how to make modifications to their work products and address a particular area of weakness. Currently the school is not yet providing a clear representation of student mastery that leads to meaningful feedback so that students engage in a reflective learning process yielding individual student growth.
 - Teachers use a variety of assessment tools. For example, they use exit slips, classwork review, and pre and post cumulative tasks to monitor student progress. However, evidence within lesson plans, or in daily classroom practice that address ongoing checks for understanding, aside from circulating the classroom to monitor student work and formative assessments of student learning that drive modifications within units of study, are not fully leveraging student awareness of their next academic steps.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: I.S. 237	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