



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Ethan Allen School

Public School/Middle School 306

**970 Vermont Street
Brooklyn
NY 11207**

Principal: Lawrence Burroughs

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Reviewer: George McLeman

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Ethan Allen School (PS/MS 306) teaches students from pre-kindergarten through grade 7. There are currently 650 students enrolled. The school is being extended to take middle school grades. This is the first year that grade 7 students attend the school and next year grade eight students will be taught here. The principal and the assistant principals are recently appointed. The recruitment and retention of teachers at P.S. 306 is challenging. A significant proportion of the teachers are in their first or second years of teaching.

The school population comprises approximately 81% Black students, 17% Hispanic students, 1% White, and 1% Asian and others. Approximately 18% are special education students, and 6% are English language learners. The attendance rate is currently running at 89 %. This is lower than City schools and similar schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The vision, leadership and determination of the principal and assistant principals have set the school in the right direction.
- There is effective use of data to identify academic, physical and social needs in pre-kindergarten through grade 3.
- The program for the teaching of reading in the early grades is detailed and effective.
- The wide range of abilities and disabilities taught together in the general classes reflects the school's values in inclusion and diversity.
- The collaborative and professional work of the personnel committee is effective in identifying strategies and support for individual students.
- Students in the special educational program make good progress.
- The increase in parental involvement in the school has given the opportunity for greater support to and collaboration with parents.
- The wide range of extra school activities provided helps to enhance and integrate the community.

What the school needs to improve

- Gain higher quality and consistency of instruction across the grades.
- Gain and use fuller data on the performance of students in the upper grades.
- Provide enhanced support and training in addressing individual needs in the general education classes.
- Provide more detail in curriculum planning for mathematics and science across the school.
- Improve attendance.
- Improve the students' behavior at lunchtime.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

This school has established secure foundations for the development of good teaching and learning and is clearly intent on improvement. It has appropriately high expectations of the students and places due emphasis on meeting individual needs. Inclusion and diversity are highly valued. The school arranges many activities after the school day and in the community to celebrate the diversity of ethnicity. “Caribbean Day” was a huge success. The school also places importance on the involvement of the parents in the school’s work and in their children’s education generally. This has increased significantly over the last two years.

The principal and the assistant principals are the driving force in this school. With their clear vision of good practice and their determination to implement it in every class, the school is improving. They constantly promote the use of data to identify steps in planning and to demonstrate progress. This is seen in the improving quality of instruction and in the general trend of improvement in the students’ achievements. Relationships among the staff are good; this is evidenced in the collaborative planning and the range of professional development programs attended. The administrative staff also recognizes much remains to be completed; this includes gaining fuller understanding and application of data, particularly in the upper grades, and in achieving greater consistency in the quality of the instruction and in the performance of the students.

How well the school meets New York City’s evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The school leaders and teachers gather a wide range of data to monitor the progress and achievements of the students. This is used mainly to identify specific needs and any lack of progress expected of individuals or groups of students. In the pre-kindergarten through grade 3 classes, for example, detailed information is generated and recorded on the academic, medical and social progress of the young students. Progress towards mastery of speaking, listening, reading and writing skills is thoroughly assessed, using the ‘DIBELS’ program and ‘ECLAS’ assessments and recorded on an electronic spreadsheet. This provides an up-to-date picture of progress and is used regularly and effectively by the teachers to identify gaps in students’ learning that need to be addressed. Discussions about the data and its implications are held on a bi-weekly basis in the common planning time used by teachers from grades kindergarten through 3.

From grade 4 through grade 7, the outcomes of tests using, for example, the Princeton Review, Reading Plus and the Impact Mathematics unit assessments, are recorded and used by teachers to monitor the progress of the classes and the grades. While these provide basic information on strengths and weaknesses, the data lacks the precision and detail of the earlier grades.

The school closely monitors the progress of English language learners, special education students and all ethnic groups. School leaders use this information to check that these students are catching up with their peers. The information collated on special education students is particularly well recorded and used. The special education needs team and the academic intervention staff act directly on the data and their use of the information is rigorous and effective. In the main the progress of these subgroups is sound.

The school also monitors the progress of classes and grades over time. It compares how the respective grades are progressing in the different subjects and how the school's results compare with schools in similar contexts.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

From the analysis of the data, targets are set for individuals and groups of students. Issues that are identified for the development of the instruction are set as longer-term objectives for the whole school. Teachers in the early grades effectively use the detailed data they hold to plan and prepare the next steps in the students' learning. A feature of the school's work at this stage is the close collaboration among staff in determining strategies for improvement. This involves class teachers, specialists and academic intervention staff. In the upper grades the students' test scores are monitored individually and collectively to identify concerns and trends in the students learning. Item analysis is applied to detect weaknesses in learning and teaching in the subjects. The use of data to allocate the pupils to groups and tasks is a developing feature. Subject coaches discuss the results with teachers and advise on strategies for improving instruction and learning. Additional, effective support is provided in after school academic programs such as "Seamless Day" to provide additional motivation and instruction for students from grades 3 through 6 who struggle with aspects of learning.

With the special education students, the teachers and paragraph-professionals pay close attention to the small steps taken. A wide range of evidence is used to assess progress in this regard. Frequent formal and informal discussions are arranged to discuss the effectiveness of the intervention strategies. These include case conferences attended by staff from the school and external services. Goals and objectives on the students' individual education plans are precisely drafted and closely monitored.

In addition to numerical data, the school uses discursive and observational information to evaluate and develop instruction and learning. Individual conferencing on the pupils' progress in English language arts goes on frequently in the lower grades, but it is less prominent in the upper grades. Administrative and instructional staff continually monitor the behavior of the students in class and around the school. While the school is orderly and relaxed, behavior at lunchtime can occasionally be noisy and disruptive. The school has recently renewed its efforts and strategies in addressing this. High expectations of the students' work and their social and academic progress are regularly conveyed to parents and carers. Although the parents value the frequent, helpful meetings they have with their children's teachers, the school is aware that parental responsiveness and involvement could be much fuller and this has a high priority in the school's goals.

At whole school level, goals and objectives are set and recorded in the school's Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP). These are clear, precise and measurable, and firmly based on the assessment and test data of the students' progress and achievements. The principal has set the challenging target of increasing the students' scores by 10% year-on-year.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school's work is undeveloped with some proficient features.

The school is developing learning programs that are progressive in structure and responsive to individual needs of the students, but there are inconsistencies in the degree to which this is practiced across the school. With English language arts, the curriculum is specified in detail with skills and knowledge explicitly outlined. This promotes good pedagogical understanding of the teachers and enables them to have a repertoire of steps and resources to meet individual need of the students. In mathematics and science teaching, although the teachers use published programs, there is less detail in the specification of this curriculum. Consequently, the teachers find it more difficult to pitch the levels of instruction accurately or to employ suitable strategies for individual learners.

Teachers know they are accountable. This is demonstrated in discussions on the progress of the students, and the collaborative sharing and planning among the staff. Increasingly the teachers are aware of the relationship between student progress and the quality of their instruction. The subject coaches and the administrative staff offer models of the instruction they wish to promote at the school; this is a good feature. The teachers value the comments, advice and support from observations and discussions.

The school schedules its instruction to ensure that appropriate emphasis is given to the students' learning in English language arts and mathematics. Additional time and expertise is provided to support this, particularly for students who find learning difficult. Specialist support is also scheduled and effectively used for students with disabilities.

Where teaching is good it encourages the students to engage fully with the tasks set, and participate actively in their learning. Examples of this were seen in the students' discussions about novels and authorship. The levels of student participation are not generally high, and the administrative staff is promoting more active, participative instruction. Decisions about staffing and resource allocation are firmly based on the needs revealed by the data on students' performance and observations of instruction.

Despite continual attention and cajoling, attendance, running at just under 90%, is still too low. The school has a range of strategies in place and has made this a high priority for improvement in the current year.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The administrative staff have been appointed on the basis of their strong instructional leadership qualities, their understanding of the effective use of data, and their drive and

determination to effect improvement at the school. The administration appoints teachers who understand and respect the school's values on diversity, share its goals for continual improvement and recognize the potential to use data to good effect. The assistant principals focus on the academic growth of the students, and they are accountable for that.

The school places much emphasis on professional development of the teachers. Data is used to identify areas for attention and for the selection of strategies to effect improvement in instruction. This is undertaken at whole school level in the introduction of new reading instruction programs, or in grades for specific curricular elements, or for individual teachers. Other developments take place following formal observations, or from the principal's walkthroughs. At other times, one-on-one conversations are held to identify areas for improvement and ways in which it may be gained. The literacy and the mathematics coaches make significant contributions to the developing understanding and skill of the teachers. New teachers at the school feel well supported through a "buddying" system. They feel able to talk aspects of their needs over with the buddy and with the subject coaches. In addition, the teachers attend workshops provided by local colleges and visit other schools to observe good practice.

These good practices are led by the principal and assistant principals who know the school well and are constantly driving improvement. They are well respected by the teachers, parents and students. The school runs smoothly and effectively.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school has a detailed, wide ranging and clearly structured Comprehensive Education Plan. This, together with the principal's performance review (PPR), provides clear direction and accountability for the school's growth. The overall goals of the school are clearly recorded along with action plans containing precise objectives, appropriate strategies, designated responsibilities and realistic timescales.

The meeting of goals and objectives is continually monitored and reviewed. The PPR is conducted twice yearly and the principal's cabinet meets on a bi-weekly basis to discuss progress, to adjust priorities where necessary and to extend and amend strategies. These meetings feature full, open consideration of objective data, effective collaboration and firm decision-making. Teachers and coaches are also involved in the evaluative discussions, comparing progress across the classes and subsequent planning. While the general trend in the students' performances is upward, the detailed data shows that there is considerable variation across grades and subjects. A recent review of the progress of subgroups, for example, recognized that while the students were meeting the prescribed goals, there was clear potential for higher achievement and strategies were adjusted to accelerate learning. The school's self-evaluation statement provides an honest and accurate picture of the school's position and the intentions and strategies to improve.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Ethan Allen School (PS 306)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score		X	

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> each student, classroom, grade level, 		X	
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 			X
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> all other categories of interest to the school* 		X	
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1		X	

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.		X	
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.		X	
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.		X	
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.		X	
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2		X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.	X		
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.	X		
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.	X		
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.		X	
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3	X		
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.		X	
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.		X	
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.		X	
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4		X	
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.		X	
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X	