



# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**Emily Dickinson**

**Elementary School 075  
735 West End Avenue  
New York  
NY 10025**

**Principal: Robert O'Brien**

**Dates of review: May 12 - 13, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Peter Lewis**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Emily Dickinson is an elementary school with 795 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 30% Black, 51% Hispanic, 13% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 18% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 -2007 was 92.5%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school has improved rapidly in gathering and interpreting a good range of student assessment data.
- Data analysis provides a good picture of trends in student performance, as well as comparisons between the performances of different groups.
- Good support is provided for students whose performance is causing concern, for English language learners and special education students.
- There is good, and occasionally very good, collaboration developing across the school that is well modeled and supported by senior staff.
- Relationships between staff, and between staff and students are good, which has a positive impact on students' enjoyment of school.
- The curriculum is considerably enhanced by the very well planned emphasis on the arts.
- There are good systems for the induction and support of staff new to the school.
- Strategic planning is well supported by careful budget and staffing decisions which have helped the school to secure improvement.
- There is a clear vision for the school's improvement, which has led to gains in learning and provides good capacity for further improvement.

### What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that teachers are consistent in their use of data to plan differentiated work that fully challenges all students.
- Make greater use of comparisons with other schools' performance in analyzing the school's effectiveness.
- Set projected goals for student achievement at the beginning of each year to reflect their individual potential from their different starting points.
- Develop the leadership capacity of the newly established administration by introducing more specific monitoring, evaluation and planning to their roles.
- Formalize the recording of monitoring outcomes so that common strengths can be identified and built upon and weaknesses remedied.
- Extend the work already undertaken in mapping the curriculum to include specific links between English, math and other subjects.

## Part 3: Main Findings

### Progress made since the last review

The school has made some progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is proficient.**

There has been some progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review, particularly in establishing a skilled leadership team and in increasing teachers' sense of accountability for their students' learning. Very good improvement has been secured in establishing systems for collecting, analyzing and using assessment data to understand patterns in student learning. While there have been improvements in teachers' classroom organization, and in their use of assessment, this remains inconsistent as does planning for differentiation which means that lessons do not regularly challenge students enough. School leaders recognize the deficiencies in practice and consequently whole-school planning includes a good focus on improving strategies that have the potential to secure further improvement.

The strong understanding of data shown in the work of school leaders, the data manager and the academic intervention team has been used well in supporting the development of the school's inquiry team. Sharing the analysis of data, whether from whole school assessment information or the inquiry team's focus group, has established the questions, "Do they get it, does it work, how can we improve next year?" as a regular focus of meetings. Although there remains some resistance, the increased use of assessment information is seen in a positive light by most staff. Collaboration between staff has developed well and is a strong feature of the school's work.

The principal has a very clear vision for the school's development. He has ensured that key appointments have been made to support the realization of this. With strength of purpose and clear communications, he has ensured that improved organization and data interpretation has made a positive impact on student achievement. The school is well placed to move forward. The arts are now well supported and make a good contribution to the curriculum, although the school has yet to fully establish formal links between subjects to provide relevance and consolidation of learning.

The careful tracking of student learning enables timely and focused interventions that are effective in raising achievement, particularly of those groups who are causing concern. Students' goals are set against grade expectations so that, in broad terms, they know what to aim for. The lack of interim markers of achievement makes it difficult for the school to be certain that progress is of a sufficient rate to ensure success. The principal and his assistants make sound use of information from observations to identify issues for strategic improvement. However, the evaluation of grade and departmental effectiveness is not recorded with sufficient precision to inform whole school planning.

## **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 the student's progress over time.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

In contrast with the situation that prevailed at the time of the previous Quality Review, the school now collects a very good range of data and analyzes it well to provide a clear picture of student achievement across subjects, grades and classes. The appointment of a skilled data specialist, shared with another school, enables leaders to have access to a very good set of assessment information that is accurate, carefully organized and clearly summarized. This ensures that they have the right information to assist them in making hypotheses from the data and in collaborating with teachers in planning action. Although this aspect of the data manager's role is comparatively new, she is already generating interpretations of data that are beginning to be used well by leaders in looking at features that affect student progress. Her role in two similar schools enables some comparisons to be made, but the school has sensibly decided to further analyze its performance in relation to a broader range of other schools.

Good comparisons between the performances of different groups are used well in modifying aspects of the curriculum and making interventions. The analysis of gender differences has led to action that has reduced the gap between the performance of boys and girls. The school's good analysis of the performance of special education students and English language learners demonstrates comparative rates of progress, and is well used in ascertaining the effectiveness of collaborative team teaching and dual language classes. Additionally, the inquiry team's focus on the lowest performing students in grades 2 and 3 helps the school build its understanding of student performance from the younger to the older grades. Administrators, the data specialist and coaches collaborate well in planning training for staff in data analysis. This has been successful in raising teachers' awareness, although the school plans to continue to establish greater consistency in teachers' use of data, and in the use of 'Acuity' in particular as these practices are currently insufficiently developed.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

Developments in the school's use of data lead to accurate analyses of the school's performance, which increasingly inform plans to address identified weaknesses. Goals for student achievement are set to the curricular requirements for each grade following discussion between administrators, coaches and teachers. Clear information about the comparative rates of student progress enables the school to identify where students are making gains, remaining static or slipping in their learning. Good interventions for lower achieving, and special education students have a positive impact on their learning. The school has yet to derive whole school goals from the aggregation of individual student goals, drawn from past performance. In general, the results of testing at fixed points during the year create what the school regards as interim goals. However, there is a lack of clear projections of student achievement from the start to the end of each year.

Good and developing practice exists in setting goals for students' achievement in reading with the identification of the progress expected of different students in relation to their starting points. Parents are right in saying that the school is good at providing support for students who experience difficulties. Good and regular communication from the school ensures that parents know the expectations for students in each grade, and how they can help their children to improve their progress. The two newly appointed assistant principals provide good support for the principal in communicating his vision for the school's development. Consequently, staff are increasingly aware of planned improvements and of their part in bringing about change.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The curriculum aligns with requirements. Curriculum maps assist teachers in planning for continuity, and the school has begun to consider the development of links between subjects, with a good start having been made in English language arts. The guided reading program gives structure to the school's literacy teaching. Consequently, reading increasingly develops students' skills in such as social studies. The school has expanded its curriculum, with further support for the arts driven by one of the newly appointed assistant principals with a strong background in this aspect. Another assistant principal has a good record of accomplishment in English language learner and dual language provision. This also demonstrates the principal's clear strategic vision and the good use of budget and staff towards securing improvement. The range of activities provided, particularly when lessons include an active or investigative component, motivates students who consequently enjoy coming to school. They have positive relationships with their teachers, reflecting the good quality of relationships throughout the school. The proportion of students who do not arrive on time remains an issue however.

The school places considerable emphasis on developing classroom strategies to ensure greater effectiveness in learning. Dual language and collaborative team teaching (CTT) classes are now established. The development of differentiation in, particularly, the CTT classes has gone a long way towards setting the expectation for the rest of the school. As the principal says, "This is where we are trying to get to". The development of the school's reading program results in greater consideration being given to students' differing needs in this area. The school has put in place the information required from which teachers could plan suitably challenging work for students, but this latter aspect remains inconsistent

**Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The principal and his assistant principals regularly monitor teaching and, as a result, have a good sense of the impact of instruction on learning across the school and between classes and grades. Teachers value the feedback that they receive from

observations, although this is sometimes too delayed for it to have an immediate impact. Plans for improvement are drawn predominantly from an informal understanding of comparative strengths and weaknesses in instruction, as leaders do not formally record the outcomes of monitoring and of data evaluation enough. In part, this is due to the overview model currently followed by administrators, who rotate their grade and subject accountabilities on an 8-week cycle. The principal, with the assistant principals, has begun to look at alternatives to further develop leadership capacity and to provide administrators with a longer-term understanding of the impact of developments.

Since the previous Quality Review, the school has improved the planning of professional development arising from the analysis of class observation and student assessment data. The academic intervention team has rapidly developed. Their closer involvement with teachers is more effective because of their increased understanding of data, particularly relating to lower achieving students. Academic intervention is well planned and effective. The partnership with a training organization in identifying and sharing good practice, for example, has achieved some success in building teachers' skills, through mentor groups of grade and departmental teachers. Together with very clear and well-communicated organizational systems, this strategy ensures good support for teachers, particularly those new to the school. The school is less successful in building classroom strategies, such as in planning and setting lesson aims that fully describe learning. This rightly remains a focus area for administrators and coaches.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

Since its last review, the school has ensured that the collection and analysis of data have developed well, particularly at senior level and amongst support staff. Data review meetings take place in each term and provide information about gains in learning, where students are successful and where modifications are required. However, the school has yet to set interim markers to tell it whether students are on an identified track towards targeted achievement. The range of analysis and discussion following interim testing provides good information on how much progress students are making and informs monthly meetings between teachers and administrators. Resulting actions have led to gains in learning, particularly for low achieving students and those whose performance is causing concern.

Data analysis, discussion and classroom observation help the school to understand aspects of its curriculum and instruction that achieve success and, therefore, of where improvement is needed. Leaders, for example, know that some teachers need more help to understand the City's new data systems, and to use this information to plan suitably challenging work for all students. Work to develop these skills has achieved some success, and more is planned. Good communication systems have ensured that staff know the priorities for school development. Their understanding of their own part in promoting improvement through changes to their own practice is getting better and the majority of staff are committed to the school's strongly stated vision. The lack of consistency in recording grade and department monitoring, however, hampers the school in developing a clear picture of the impact of change, with which to modify or re-emphasize whole school planning.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Emily Dickinson</b>	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>			X		

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

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?				X	
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?			X		
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?			X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				X	

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.**

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?			X		
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?			X		
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?			X		
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?			X		
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?			X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			X		

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.**

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?			X		
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?			X		
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?		X			
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?			X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X		

<b>Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?			X		
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?			X		
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?			X		
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?			X		
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?			X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X		

<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>					
<b>To what extent do . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?		X			
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?			X		
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?			X		
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?			X		
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X		

◇	<b>Outstanding</b>
+	<b>Well Developed</b>
✓	<b>Proficient</b>
➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>