



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Dr Edmund Horan School

Middle-High School 079

**55 East 120 Street
New York
NY 10035**

Principal: Rebecca Bravo

Dates of review: March 6 - 7, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Jo Cheadle

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

Overall evaluation

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

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Dr Edmund Horan is a middle-high school with 369 students from grade 6 through grade 12+. The school population comprises 36% Black, 59% Hispanic, 4% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 52% English language learners. Boys account for 57% of the students enrolled and girls account for 43%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 - 2007 was 81.2%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Dr Edmund Horan is a District 75 school, serving students with a range of very specific and complex learning needs. The school is housed in its own building.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and her senior cabinet provide very strong and committed leadership based on an impeccably clear vision for the school's outcomes.
- Leaders and faculty understand individual student needs extremely well and this knowledge guides all work and decision making.
- The school collects, analyses and makes excellent use of a very wide range of data to ensure that student needs are supported effectively.
- There are very high levels of collaboration to ensure that data informs all levels of the school's work, including goal setting and self-evaluation.
- The school has a wonderful climate for learning encouraged by a professional, collegiate, and accountable team of people who strive to do their best.
- The school's curriculum is very good and learning experiences greatly support the development of students' skills for life.
- Value for and involvement of parents is high on the school's agenda and parents appreciate this very much.
- Teaching is of a very good quality and staff appreciate opportunities to improve their practice through very good professional development.
- Leaders devise excellent plans for long-term, sustainable development through a regular and rigorous cycle of self-reflection.
- Excellent links with a wide range of dedicated partners very effectively support students' academic, social and emotional progress.

What the school needs to improve

- Wherever possible, develop appropriate procedures for sharing "next step" goals with students and their parents.
- Create opportunities for extended in-house integration programs.
- Make further comparisons of outcomes with other schools.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

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

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

The Dr Edmund Horan School is a special school in many senses. From its unique students to its dedicated leaders and faculty, the school exudes an empowering and enabling passion for learning. The leadership of a very dedicated principal intrinsically drives the school's vision for development and growth. She has an acute understanding of student needs and a total belief in their potential. She communicates her vision with absolute clarity and inspires her staff to give of their best. School leaders and faculty share her vision completely. The school offers excellent support and guidance to parents. Parents are extremely grateful that the school feels like an extension of their own families. They know that their children make good progress and that the school prepares them for their future lives. The school's rigorous attention to student "accuracy and independence" lies behind all action planning and decision-making. Extended knowledge, skills and understanding in the analysis of data have taken the school's self-evaluation and strategic thinking to new levels. Recent work on curriculum revitalization and goal setting is having a significant impact on teaching and learning. It is also providing very good opportunities for leaders to make detailed measures of student outcomes. With extended data compilation and analysis, the school is now in a better position to compare the effectiveness of its work in relation to others schools.

The inquiry team is working very well. Members have selected a target student group and are focusing on the development of speaking and listening skills. The work of the team is very relevant to the improvement of whole school practice in the area of community-based instruction. The team has an agreed culmination in the creation of a mini unit of study to prepare students for work placement. They have established measurable goals in each skill area and making use of ongoing data collection from teachers to facilitate interim evaluation and the amendment of plans and targets. Ultimately, the team will compare student outcomes from past work placements with those after the creation of the preparation study unit. Final evaluations and measures of success will direct future work.

The school has addressed the areas for improvement from the last Quality Review very seriously. From an already well-established data set, leaders have created an easily accessible and very manageable computerized data management system. This has encouraged and enabled close and productive consideration of the whole school curriculum, goal setting and instructional practices although next steps are not shared with students and their parents. Students have access to a full and varied curriculum to which leaders are making ongoing improvements. Ongoing evaluation of teaching and learning throughout the school facilitates development.

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.

The school has made enormous progress in streamlining a wide range of data pertaining to all students into a fully accessible and very useful computer managed data system. The appointment of a well-informed and capable data specialist has moved this work forward rapidly. The school cabinet works closely to maximize use of the data set to establish educational directions, support teaching and learning and measure outcomes. Knowledge of individual students is excellent. Leaders and faculty have an exceptional understanding of the specific academic, personal, social and emotional needs of each student. There are close relations with students' families that enable frequent updates. Leaders and teachers follow closely the progress made by English language learners, male and female students and students from different ethnic groups. They carry out very detailed analysis of students from the two main special educational categories that the school serves, which drives planning to meet their specific needs effectively. As yet, the school has not carried out in-depth comparisons of its work in relation to other similar schools, although there are good partnerships with those that serve similar students. It is hard to locate a school where true similarities exist, especially when comparing the school's innovative curriculum. However, leaders are looking forward to making substantive comparisons to establish the successes and necessary improvements in their work, following full implementation of new curriculum planning systems across the school.

A current success in the generation, collection and use of data lies in the commitment of staff to take on board new systems and technology and make them work for the good of students. Without exception, teachers recognize that their hard work is fruitful. Support from school leaders, the data specialist and the school-based coach have been fundamental in establishing staff ownership of new systems and a change in mindset for how data is used. High quality in-house and external training has taken place. Staff members are open to and expectant of further training to hone their skills and knowledge.

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 well developed.

Excellent use of data leads to the setting of extremely clear priorities for whole school improvement. Leaders communicate these priorities with tremendous clarity to the whole school community. Shared awareness of where student outcomes need to improve enables teachers to work in true collaboration to set highly relevant goals for individuals. Goals are set extremely methodically to encourage good rates of progress for those students identified in need of particular support. Teachers' clear focus encourages individual student and school-wide improvements. Goals are set with exceptional accuracy. In new curriculum planning documentation, tiny steps towards overall goals are clearly established. However, the school does not consistently share these "next steps" with students or their parents. For students with whom it is appropriate, the school misses a vital opportunity to enable them to articulate their own short-term goals and recognize the progress they make. In addition, without simple pointers, parents are not able to focus on the very specific things they can do at home to help their children. In general, however, parental contribution is highly encouraged and appreciated at the school. Unusually close

relationships between teachers and parents enable precise attention to individual needs and support students very effectively.

In all aspects of school life, expectations of both students and teachers are extremely high. Leaders set equally high expectations for themselves. This is exemplified in the approach taken to addressing the areas cited for improvement at the last Quality Review. Leaders have worked diligently and determinedly to analyze data thoroughly and purposely. From this analysis, they have adapted curriculum programs for students. Adaptations concentrate on the school's vision to prepare students for future independent lives. The work has been intensive and time consuming. The school-based coach and data specialist have worked in effective collaboration to facilitate curriculum developments. Members of staff are committed to changes, even when workloads have been huge, because they fully recognize the positive influence the revised way of working will have on students. The principal declares herself a "hard task master", but staff members respect her for the tenacity she shows to do what is right for the students.

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 well developed.

The school has a well-developed and interesting curriculum that reflects the continuous attention paid to data analysis. Lessons take into account the targets from students' individual education plans, prior achievements, past experiences and personal interests. Students are motivated because teachers make clear links between subjects and themes are relevant to students' lives. In one lesson observed, the seamless flow from math work into English language arts, all centered on a trip to the cinema, ensured that a group of older teenage boys remained on task and enjoyed their learning. Teachers engage students because they work with a sound knowledge of their personalities and life experiences. Additionally, teachers generally match lessons very closely to student needs and provide the appropriate level of challenge. This encourages good student involvement. The school is not complacent in this area however, and constantly seeks methods of differentiating learning to increasingly positive effect.

A particular strength of the curriculum is the program for community based learning. Wherever possible, students are given the opportunity to gain work experience in various settings. Leaders carefully select placements to match students' abilities and particular learning needs. When visiting these placements it is immediately obvious that students recognize their own developing skills. Students working at the local general hospital, for example, develop good organizational strategies, improve their math skills and extend their understanding of personal and social interaction. These developments serve students significantly as they move to adult life. Within school, not enough is done to capitalize on opportunities for students of all abilities to work together. There are not yet enough chances for students to make academic gains and develop valuable life skills through greater levels of partnership and collaboration within the normal school day.

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 well developed.

The school has well structured and consistent procedures for gathering information about teaching and learning. Assistant principals are fully involved in these procedures. Teachers have a very clear understanding of where strengths and areas for development lie and appreciate feedback that improves their practice. Leaders and staff understand that not everyone can be “in the same place at the same time”. For this reason, teachers in need of support have clear intervention plans and leaders provide them with individualized programs to develop skills and knowledge. Support for new teachers is equally effective. The school makes good use of the Santa Cruz teaching standards to provide staff with a common rubric for expectations.

Excellent links with a range of partners extremely effectively support students towards their academic, personal and social goals. Leaders constantly seek new links that extend opportunities for students and build their capacity for accuracy and independency. Links with partners such as the ABC Day Care Centres, Lifespire and two local hospitals not only provide very valuable opportunities for students, but also development greater awareness for the hosts. The director of one hospital was very clear about the excellent contribution to awareness building for his own staff afforded through links with the school.

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 outstanding.

The vision for student outcomes is impeccably clear. All adults work towards enabling each student to live a productive and meaningful life empowered by basic skills that build confidence and aptitude. School leaders are extremely serious in their drive to improve and “cultivate a culture that is sustainable”. They recognize that development work must outlive each of them and provide continually effective education for students. The school is highly reflective of its practice. Leaders pay focused and determined attention to areas in need of development and improvement. To this end, there is an exceptionally rigorous and regular process of monitoring, evaluating and measuring both student and teacher outcomes to establish new strategies and new goals for growth. Because teachers know and understand whole school priorities, they are able to measure the progress of individuals that influence these goals. In turn, leaders make highly effective use all assessment information gathered by teachers to monitor, measure and adapt. Each member of staff at this school is committed to making a difference to the lives of their students. They work successfully to realize the vision.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

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|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| SCHOOL NAME: Dr Edmund Horan School | Δ | ▷ | ✓ | + | ◇ |
| Quality Score | | | | 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 | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 1 | | | | 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 |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 2 | | | | 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 | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 3 | | | | X | |

| 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. | | | | | |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| To what extent does the school . . . | Δ | ➤ | ✓ | + | ◇ |
| 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 |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 4 | | | | X | |

| 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. | | | | | |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| To what extent do . . . | Δ | ➤ | ✓ | + | ◇ |
| 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 |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 5 | | | | | X |

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|---|--|
| ◇ | Outstanding |
| + | Well Developed |
| ✓ | Proficient |
| ➤ | Underdeveloped with Proficient Features |
| Δ | Underdeveloped |