



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Alfred E Smith School

Elementary School 163

**163 West 97 Street
New York
NY 10025**

Principal: Virginia Pepe

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Alfred E Smith School is an elementary school with 655 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 25.9% Black, 48.2% Hispanic, 22.6% White, and 2.9% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 93.2%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's scheduling and programmatic structure provides an effective, focused, integrated program for students resulting in clear progress in many areas.
- The principal distributes leadership well and develops capacity and ownership among staff.
- Based on data, there is effectively differentiated instruction with focused, small groups in all areas.
- Students are very engaged and excited to demonstrate their knowledge and learning.
- The school collects and analyzes a good range of data about individual student progress and achievement and has high expectations.
- The progress of special education students and English language learners is monitored effectively.
- The school's new intervention programs effectively target student needs and provides effective push-in/pull-out services for struggling students.
- The strong, content-driven professional development and focused new teacher induction programs ensure teachers receive effective, differentiated opportunities to enable them to improve their practice.
- Strong relationships among staff and students create a community where students are comfortable and confident to explore, question and discover.
- The school is strategic in its development of partnerships with outside organizations to ensure close alignment with its goals.

What the school needs to improve

- Be more specific in goal setting by establishing benchmarks, interim goals and success criteria so that staff can be actively involved in evaluating the impact of initiatives on student progress.
- Generate regular, comparative data to measure the effectiveness of programs, goals and initiatives on particular individuals and sub-populations of students.
- Refine goal setting for individual teachers by introducing a monitoring rubric that focuses on teaching, learning and student outcomes.

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.

Alfred E Smith School is a well run school where students thrive in an environment of dynamic classrooms where academic progress and achievement continue to grow. The school's collection and analysis of data ensures staff know each student's achievement and needs well. The progress of special education students and English language learners is monitored effectively, but the school does not analyze and compare trends and patterns in other sub-populations quite as well. The scheduling and programmatic structure of the school provides students with a quality curriculum that provides a strong foundation for the differentiated instruction evident in classrooms. As a result, students are excited about learning and enjoy school immensely. Well-conceived professional development furthers the quality educational program received by students as evident in classrooms. The new academic intervention services deepen the existing work that helps struggling students make good progress and achieve more.

The school's high expectations have led to increases in test scores at all levels, but particularly for lower achieving students. School plans are well thought-out with measurable goals and implemented well, but plans do not contain benchmarks, interim goals and success criteria that would enable staff to be actively involved in evaluating the impact of initiatives and student progress.

Since the last Quality Review, the school has effectively implemented technology for teachers and has created rigorous attendance procedures to ensure higher student attendance. The academic intervention team provides good support for the integration of literacy. The school has made significant progress in communicating more effectively with parents and stakeholders about school goals and their child's strengths and next steps. The inquiry team is making good progress in responding to data analysis. They initiated an effective program to address a deficiency in students' understanding of measurement.

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 collects a good range of quantitative and qualitative data on each student and as a result can effectively monitor and track the progress and achievement of individuals well. The school utilizes running records four times a year and Everyday Math checklists for regular in-class monitoring. It has now begun to compare English running records to the newly implemented Spanish running records to compare progress. Students write

baseline assessments in early September and the schools “SWAT” team approach to assessment ensures teachers receive the results immediately enabling them to determine groupings and interventions very early on in the year. Teachers write detailed, regular monitoring notes on each child to create a broader understanding of each student outside of standardized testing. Data informs all instruction as the data coordinator trains teachers well in the use of data. The school developed a good plan for enrichment in math after the progress report demonstrated the need to target math.

While the school collects data on special education students and English language learner populations just as well as all individuals, they do not disaggregate this data to analyze the progress, trends and patterns of other sub-populations to the same degree. This means the school relies on its progress report for analysis of target groups, which do not match the school’s own sub-populations sufficiently well.

The school compares all of its data and progress well to previous years and can clearly show marked progress in most areas of their educational program. All stakeholders celebrate improvements in academics, leadership and community throughout the school over the past years. The school does some comparisons with similar schools. Its close ties with PS 75 allow for sharing of best practice, while the school’s contacts with other dual language and gifted and talented schools provide some insight.

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.

The school sets high expectations for all students. Teaching is rigorous in classes and staff expect students to be on task regularly and take ownership for their learning. As a result, student progress continues to rise with students explicitly stating that they “can always do better.” Parents are demanding and expect increasingly higher levels of communication and support. They specifically appreciate the school consulting them and being a part of academic and social solutions for their children. Teachers go the extra mile in communicating with parents about their child’s progress and performance. Progress reports are detailed, specific to each child and explain clearly what their child has mastered, what next steps are and how they can help them achieve their goals.

The school’s plan to improve reading comprehension is clear with the use of running records where teachers add strict comprehension components to assessments. Students continue to move to higher levels despite this more rigorous expectation. The school has implemented some school-wide plans well throughout the building. For example, when State tests results revealed a deficiency in measurement, the inquiry team began a good program where even kindergarten students began to focus on counting money in order to prepare them for future assessments. Kindergarten students also learn to play chess in order to take part in the school’s focus on improving math skills and enrichment.

The school implemented the academic intervention services program only late last year, but it has made a significant impact on student performance. After receiving targeted intervention services, some students showed significant gains on state assessments. The school staffs the academic intervention services team very well with experienced teachers and effectively locks in schedules whereby most classes consistently have two teachers in the room to meet student need. The team meets to discuss detailed analyses of students and to initiate plans for student intervention.

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.

Students are very engaged and work hard in classes where well-chosen, small groupings are the norm. Teachers implement effective strategies to ensure they provide sufficient challenge for most students. The school is successful in holding teachers accountable for their work and ensures classes are varied, hands-on and dynamic. Scheduling and the programmatic structure of the school effectively ensure it can place students in a class, at their level. This includes general education, collaborative team teaching, gifted and talented, dual language or gifted and talented dual language streams. Students do however integrate in various ways throughout the schedule with some students splitting their schedule between two streams. For example, a parent detailed a story where her child moves to a gifted and talented class for reading from her regular collaborative team teaching class.

The school integrates the curriculum in most areas with plans in place to integrate the arts further. The principal is creative and strategic in order to budget and staff the programmatic structure and significant academic intervention services program. There is a better teacher to student ratio for most classes because of the various streams. Along with the additional academic intervention services staff required, the school has effectively managed schedules and finances to ensure it delivers all services effectively. With the loss of Title 1 funding this year, the continued funding of programs is particularly impressive.

Strong relationships throughout the school have resulted in a community where students feel safe to express themselves and feel secure to learn through exploration and self-discovery. Students turn to teachers and the principal for help. During the Review, two students came directly to the principal when they thought other students in the cafeteria were getting too loud and noisy. Students expressed their desire to be at school because, “all of our friends and teachers are here.” As a result, of this community and added incentives and regular celebrations, student attendance is nearly 94% with evidence of progress and continued growth.

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.

Content-specific professional development is a direct result of the school’s goal to further integrate the curriculum and ensure effective teaching in all subject areas. Professional development occurs once a week during grade level meetings. The restructured system provides effective training in the core content areas for all teachers, regardless of stream. Staff focus on one content area per week with the last session per month dedicated to teacher specific issues. Teachers welcome the changes from last year’s structure and celebrate the effectiveness and value of the sessions as they specifically target and cater to school specific needs. In addition, teachers may be part of an ongoing coaching cycle depending on their specific need and may just as easily leave a coaching cycle once the teacher and the administrator determine it is no longer necessary. As a result, teachers receive ongoing, professional development that serves the greater needs of the school as

well as specific differentiated training to meet their needs. Additional supports come in the way of partnerships. A partnership with Fordham University provides a literacy specialist to support teachers in assessment of students.

New teachers receive good support. Along with mentoring, they receive coaching up to three times per week and are shown model and demonstration lessons throughout the year from experienced teachers in their content area. As a result, their effectiveness in classrooms and ability to use data are similar to that of experienced teachers. New teachers are very excited about their training and have readily adopted the school's philosophy of life long learning. Most grade-level meetings provide targeted professional development. Teachers find time to collaborate and plan informally outside the schedule. The school has developed an excellent way of promoting self-evaluation by analyzing videos of practice. This has promoted a willingness to reflect honestly on what works and why by choosing a lens through which to analyze the impact of teaching on learning. All staff are able to take on meaningful leadership roles throughout the school and teachers celebrate the improvements in their ability to affect change and planning.

The school has developed a limited number of high quality partnerships with outside organizations that align closely with the school's curriculum and goals. For example, the Empire State Grant has been used very effectively to develop ways of integrating the arts more effectively into the third grade curriculum.

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.

The school has given good thought to its plans for program-wide improvement and how it will achieve its goals. It determines and lists the tasks that need doing to implement plans and measures for effective implementation are in place and checked at regular intervals. Too many goals do not have benchmarks, interim goals or success criteria. As a result, the school is limited in its ability to respond to and revise plans quickly. In addition, opportunities are missed to involve staff actively in evaluating the impact of initiatives on student progress. The school has been forward thinking in establishing goals for individual teachers, but has not yet linked these to a monitoring rubric that focuses on teaching, learning and student outcomes.

The principal recognizes that many plans are still in progress and full implementation has not yet occurred. She admits that she will not determine effectiveness until the end of the year or until the school can determine appropriate measures. While there is some evidence that interventions are effective, the school is not able to determine the effectiveness of distinct programs on specific individuals or sub-populations. As a result, it is unable to make adequate comparisons to measure the relative value of initiatives or respond quickly enough to required change. The school is moving in a positive direction through constant and continued improvements in classroom practice and a strong vision that ensures the strength of an effective programmatic structure where students come first and students are successful.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Alfred E Smith 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

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