

Quality Review

Report

2008-2009

Lab School

Elementary School 91
2200 Aqueduct Street
Bronx
NY 10453

Principal: Rosemary Prati

Dates of review: December 3 – 4, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Kathleen Tuttle

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Lab School is an elementary school with 764 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 21% Black, 72% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 30% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 90.3%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 87.5% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The Lab School provides a welcoming, safe and nurturing environment for students, staff and parents, which is strongly conducive to the development of the school as a genuine learning community. Teachers' commitment is recognized by the students who echoed, "The teachers always help you till you get it," and by the parents' comments such as, "Teachers are interested in the students' success." There is a very calm, educationally focused environment in the school. The displays of student work in the hallways and in classrooms enhance the environment for learning, providing exemplar resources for other students to emulate. The school makes good use of data, but the wide range of student information is not synthesized into a common format that makes it easily accessible to all stakeholders.

Students enjoy coming to school. They feel valued by their teachers and are engaged by the majority of their classes. They are encouraged to reflect upon their learning by setting goals after receiving their report cards. However, student goal setting does not currently involve interim benchmarks with suitable timeframes for meeting the interim goals linked to a long-term goal. Teachers feel both empowered and supported by the professional development and make curricular decisions collaboratively to improve student achievement. Professional development is at the heart of everything the school does. Currently, there is no clear link between the goals in the Comprehensive Educational Plan and measurable goal setting for teachers with calendared timeframes for meeting short-term goals. In addition, currently there is no means by which to assess how much impact professional development is having on student achievement.

Differentiation of instruction is an effective component of classroom practice. Teachers are confident in facilitating multiple groups of students working on different tasks in tables around the room. Teachers give attention to all subgroups of learners in both unit and lesson planning. Many classrooms are using an interdisciplinary approach in teaching skills and content. Parents feel their children are getting a good education and they appreciate the steps taken following the parent survey to open up communication by making sure that parent information is delivered in all the languages spoken in the school community. The school is making a concerted effort to involve parents in the school by celebrating student attendance with monthly assemblies. This is a significant contribution to the promotion of equal access for all parents and to building more parent participation.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has developed a professional learning community that supports student achievement.
- Differentiated instruction is embedded in classroom practice throughout the school.
- The principal makes organizational decisions to support students' achievement which aides in setting learning goals for all students.
- As a result of last year's inquiry teamwork, the early grades are increasing the depth and rigor of their work to strengthen skills in that area school-wide.
- The school is working successfully to build more parent involvement by planning student celebrations around attendance and academic improvements.
- There is a good interrelationship between subjects with cross-curriculum content making learning meaningful and enjoyable.

What the school needs to improve

- Synthesize the wide range of student information held by the school into a common format that makes it easily accessible to all stakeholders.
- Set clear timeframes for interim, short-term learning steps for all students and involve students more actively in self-assessment.
- Plan regular checkpoints where clearly measurable success criteria are evaluated to ensure the school is making progress toward the achievement of priority goals.
- Devise ways to measure the impact of professional development on the achievement of whole-school goals and set individual teacher targets.

Part 3: Main Findings

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Data collection in English language arts, math and social studies is good and the school is beginning to collect data in other core subjects as well. This ensures that teachers are aware of what each student knows and can do when they are planning their lessons. Teachers have a clear focus on gaps in learning and progress, especially for boys and English language learners. In addition to looking at the low-performing students, the school is placing appropriate emphasis on strategies to improve rates of progress for higher-achieving students. Too many students in this subgroup did not make one year's progress last year.

Teachers use a wide range of data sources and are consequently group students appropriately for reading, writing and math. Using student work for formative assessment has been a major focus this year. Interim assessment, conferencing and class tests allow teachers to respond quickly to individual student progress and to vary groupings by topic or skill. However, there is not yet a common format to track student progress that is also student and parent friendly. As a result, parents do not always understand the learning needs of their children and are not able to help them at home with their work towards meeting their goals. Presently the school has some long and short-term student goals based on the last report card and on formative assessments. However, there are no short-term learning goals with suitable timeframes and checkpoints to assist with clear expectations on meeting these goals.

To provide better ongoing communication, the school developed a progress report for interim periods between report cards. Parents are encouraged to attend parent conferences and to come to school to discuss any concerns they may have. The school is monitoring parent attendance and following up with parents to keep them informed on their children's progress. Parents express their appreciation for the warm and inviting environment that has been developing since the current principal took over the school. Focused activities for groups of parents, such as a parent tea in the primary grades and writing celebrations, have resulted in improvement in parent involvement.

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.

The staff prides itself on the collaborative culture of the school. They have developed a reflective professional learning community that supports student achievement. The math and literacy committees exist to review student data and make recommendations for changes to units of study in reading, writing and math. These committees, along with

the administrative cabinet, effectively use the available data to set the goals in the Comprehensive Educational Plan. The school leadership team evaluates the goals monthly. As yet, there are neither specific measures for most school-wide goals nor suitable timeframes for judging outcomes. The goals in the plan are transferred to the classroom through lesson planning and assessments. Teachers are using many different kinds of formative assessments to help students set goals in reading, writing, math and social studies. There is some student involvement in individual goal setting. Students reported using the report card to set their goals. The goals are posted in classrooms in different manners. Students' knowledge of their individual goals and how to achieve their goals is inconsistent throughout the school. Presently, no formal short-term goal setting take place using the literacy rubrics or student conferencing notes as an assessment tool, making it difficult for students and parents to understand clearly identified learning targets. As yet, the student goals are not specific or measurable and lack suitable timeframes.

Administrators hold data talks with individual teachers to discuss mid-line data and results from interim assessments. Classroom instruction and grouping are effectively altered because of these discussions. Grade levels also meet monthly to discuss curriculum changes based on student data. Each grade also meets periodically throughout the year to review student work and align grading practices

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students' learning goals.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

All adults in the school support each other and the school leadership in their learning and personal growth. There is genuine caring and concern for all stakeholders in the school. Respect flows both ways between adults and students. Students enjoy coming to school, and are engaged by the instruction in the majority of their classes, particularly those where they work collaboratively or experience hands-on activities. Many examples of cross-curricular content were observed in classrooms. There are also many examples of well-differentiated instruction across the grades, where instruction is linked to student needs. Differentiation of instruction is occurring in math, literacy and social studies, with equal opportunities for all learners. As yet, it is lacking in the remaining core subjects.

Classroom visits showcased students working on the same concepts, but importantly each group's activities are based on the skill level of the group. Literature circles take place for the higher achieving students in literacy based on individual student data, as well as guided reading groups for the students that need direct instruction in a skill area. English language learners are supported by being introduced to the content in Spanish with a follow up to the lesson in English. Students are given extra support as well as enrichment if they have learned the concept that is currently being taught. Units are prepared over the summer based on the data but are adjusted each month in response to the assessments. The fifth grade unit on nonfiction and fiction reading is a good example of including the Comprehensive Educational Plan goals into the unit planning. Teachers report they use the additional strategies for English language learners, students at risk, and enrichment provided in the guide for planning purposes to meet the needs of the subgroups. The principal has made a conscious effort to involve as many teachers in the curriculum-designing process as possible. She believes in empowering

her teachers to take the lead on improving classroom instruction based on student needs. Teachers clearly stated in many different forums that they feel empowered to influence decisions affecting their classrooms and the school as a whole. Teacher empowerment has led to the consistency and coherence of the curriculum seen throughout classes on a grade level as well as school wide.

The principal's clear understanding of the Progress Report led to many changes in teaching assignments and class groupings. In consultation with the leadership team, she is using the budget to give extra supports to English language learners. Indications from the Progress Report and other data called for restructuring of classroom resources and instruction. Bilingual teachers are now supporting English as second language teachers during math and reading so that the instruction can be introduced in Spanish and then supported in English. Classrooms with the lowest-achieving students have been given additional push-in teacher resources for the math and literacy blocks throughout the day. At this point in the year there has been no clear assessment designed to measure the impact of these changes on student achievement.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The principal knows her staff well and she identifies who needs to improve in what area and the reason the improvement is necessary. Professional development is a corner stone of the school's collaborative learning community on which school improvement is founded. The principal provides a structure that encourages teacher collaboration around student work and best practices for literacy, math and social studies. The data talks with the principal and grade level discussions around formative assessments lead to professional development. Teachers meet with the AUSSIE consultant and coaches to learn new strategies for the skills targeted as an area of need in student data. After teachers have practiced a strategy on their own, lab sites are organized for all to learn from and get feedback on the strategy. Teachers view the peer feedback given after the lab site demonstrations as a positive experience. This embedded practice of professional development is very effective in enhancing teacher practice.

Teachers are encouraged to participate in key decisions that affect their work. Presently the principal is making distributive leadership a priority. Group meetings with teachers demonstrate that some have a more vocalized contribution than others do. All administrators provide teachers with feedback on instruction through formal and informal observations, of which differentiated instruction has been a school-wide focus. Professional development is offered in cycles, with new teachers and English as a second language teachers being the focus of the first cycle. There is a teacher-mentor for all new teachers in the building. Grades 3 through 5 are focusing on reciprocal teaching. Presently the professional development plan is not developed for the year based on school and teacher goals. There is no formal structure or expectation that teachers set individual goals for themselves based upon their data from the prior year or the school goals for this year. The links between cause and effect are not strongly established around the goal setting process.

The principal has made a conscious effort to build capacity school wide. Last year's inquiry team has divided and grown into three teams, serving students in all the grade levels. The target population consists of ninety students. One of the outcomes of last

year's work was the understanding that number sense and numeration needed to be taught in further depth in the primary grades. This led to a change in the pacing calendar for that unit in those grades. It also became the sub-skill of study for the math inquiry team. The teachers on the inquiry teams share out the strategy they are using with the target population of students at grade level meetings and other teachers willingly embrace the strategies for their classrooms. This is proving to be an effective practice for making school-wide change.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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 principal was proactive in establishing an overview committee to review the units of study to make sure that units are aligned to the standards. There are rubrics for every literacy unit of study that grade-level teams establish collaboratively. Students can articulate how to use the rubric to improve their work. Some students report using the rubric for feedback on their work when they conference with teachers. Parents are immediately notified if their children fall behind in their homework.

The principal is a clear thinker who leads by example. The school accurately identifies its strengths and weaknesses. Because school leaders and faculty monitor and evaluate the data, there is a clear understanding of why things work and why remedial action is needed. The principal is not afraid to take action when student progress is compromised by ineffective practice.

School leaders examine individual student, subgroup and grade-level data periodically throughout the year to improve student outcomes. Teachers have an assessment system in place for every student that is often used to inform differentiated lessons in literacy, math and social studies. Teachers also review the progress of their students two or three times a year and use their marking periods to set new short-term goals, which reflect the data and their discussions. However, this review does not encompass all core subjects, but focuses on English language arts, math, and to a lesser extent, social studies and science. Although the school has established interim checkpoints during the year, the absence of interim goals means that it is not possible to evaluate the extent to which agreed actions are making an impact on teaching and learning and the achievement of whole-school goals.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

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|--|---|----------|----------|---|
| School name: Lab School | △ | ➤ | ✓ | + |
| Overall QR Score | | | X | |
| Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time. | | | | |
| <i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i> | △ | ➤ | ✓ | + |
| 1.1 collects and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students? | | | X | |
| 1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students? | | | X | |
| 1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data? | | | X | |
| 1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress? | | 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 student’s learning. | | | | |
| <i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i> | △ | ➤ | ✓ | + |
| 2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals? | | | X | |
| 2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)? | | | X | |
| 2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families? | | X | | |
| 2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps? | | | X | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 2 | | | X | |

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYQ, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

| Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals. | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|---|--|---|-------------------|---|-----------------------|
| <i>To what extent do ...</i> | △ | ➤ | ✓ | + | | | |
| 3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts that are aligned to state standards? | | | X | | | | |
| 3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals? | | | X | | | | |
| 3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals? | | | X | | | | |
| 3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults? | | | X | | | | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 3 | | | X | | | | |
| Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning. | | | | | | | |
| <i>To what extent do school leaders...</i> | △ | ➤ | ✓ | + | | | |
| 4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers? | | X | | | | | |
| 4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning? | | | X | | | | |
| 4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes? | | | X | | | | |
| 4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students? | | | X | | | | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 4 | | | X | | | | |
| Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning. | | | | | | | |
| <i>To what extent do...</i> | △ | ➤ | ✓ | + | | | |
| 5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year? | | X | | | | | |
| 5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year? | | | X | | | | |
| 5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies? | | | X | | | | |
| 5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth? | | | X | | | | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 5 | | | X | | | | |
| Quality Review Scoring Key | | | | | | | |
| △ | Underdeveloped | ➤ | Underdeveloped with Proficient Features | ✓ | Proficient | + | Well Developed |