

Quality Review Report

2009-2010

The Dumont School
Elementary- Middle School 174
574 Dumont Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11207

Principal: Ingrid Mason

Dates of review: December 2- 3, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Martin Weinstein

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Dumont school is an elementary-middle school with 467 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 67% Black, 31% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 91.9%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

The entire school community exudes confidence when discussing systems now in place to address the recent setbacks in student performance cited in the latest progress report. The principal's great vision has perpetuated a "full court press" in driving collaborative teacher teams' approaches to analysis of school, grade, class and subgroup summative and formative data, as well as scrutiny of longitudinal trends for each of these areas. This schoolwide commitment has resulted in systemic changes leading to highly refined and differentiated pedagogical practices, "finely tailored" professional development for all teachers and rigorous progress monitoring and evaluation systems, leading to the continuous revision of teachers' instructional action plans. However, some minor gaps are evident in teachers' use of progress monitoring tools and in the school leaders' review of this process.

Teachers know their students well and students know what is expected of them, both long- and short-term. The teachers are eager to conference with students before, during and after school to provide targeted academic support. The school's academic intervention team ensures that the school's growing special education and English language populations are receiving appropriate assistance. Although most students receive valuable feedback on their written work and thus are fully aware of the precise next steps required for improvement, this is not yet consistent throughout the school.

Parents are valued and embraced as an integral part of the students' development at the Dumont school. The school provides ARIS parent link training at frequent intervals and equips many areas of the school with computer access for parents, enabling them to consistently monitor their children's progress. Teachers and school leaders offer ongoing support for parents in interpreting ARIS reports, as well as providing them with conferences to discuss intervention activities within school and how parents can better assist their children at home. Appreciation of the "gestalt" of the child abounds within the school. Countless enrichment activities to promote the students' social, emotional and academic growth are offered through the school and partnered organizations. The school leaders recognize that the level of rigor, challenge and activities engaging student interest is however inconsistent to a small degree across the grades. There is also awareness on their part that differentiated instructional practice could be further embedded in all content areas. Administrators are working towards narrowing the focus of their observational walkthrough lens to more closely examine student groupings and the targeted assistance provided by teachers to students within these groups.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders, in collaboration with key stakeholders, make strategic organizational decisions that align with great precision to the school's instructional goals to improve instruction and student outcomes.
 - The school's large investment in SMARTboard and laptop technologies has been the impetus for students to delve into their studies with deeper interest and to apply their basic skills to research and conduct project-based investigations. Teachers access school-wide Wiki pages to plan and implement authentic units of study to provide a wealth of learning opportunities.
 - Consistent with the school's goals for increased time-on-task in reading, as well as promoting improvement in English language arts, the school provides a community-based partnership with the "Get Caught Reading Program". As a result, 25% more students in Kindergarten through grade 8 read on a regular basis.
- The school provides a safe, caring environment that is conducive to supporting the students' social, emotional and academic growth and promotes interest and engagement in their learning.
 - Teachers consistently volunteer to tutor students prior to regular school hours and during their lunch periods. Additionally, teachers devote their spare hours to train students in leadership development through student government and a myriad of extracurricular activities, inclusive of the arts.
 - 'Building Resiliency', a bonding program provides self-esteem bolstering as well as social skill development. Student achievement and civic contributions are regularly celebrated and showcased during "Student-Star" of the Month events. Additionally, students engage in out-of-state nature experiences sponsored by the Sierra Club. As one student stated, "At 174, teachers listen to our requests and we have many fun experiences."
- Families benefit from highly communicative school leaders and faculty. Additionally, parents' understanding of their children's progress is heightened through purposefully planned workshops and trainings.
 - The school-home connection is strengthened through monthly parent workshops relating to the ARIS parent link, document-based questioning techniques, test sophistication strategies, DIBELS and running record monitoring. These sessions allow parents to keep abreast of their child's current academic standing and enable parents to participate in the planning for next learning steps.
 - The principal and faculty convey their expectations for academic excellence through detailed and regular correspondences such as the Dumont School monthly newsletter, the principal's message, monthly calendars and weekly progress report updates. Additionally, school leaders and faculty engage parents and students in ongoing and extensive one-on-one conferences, resulting in clear expectations regarding student performance.

- Highly formalized data-based goal setting is an integral component of school culture. These efforts enable faculty to identify the students' next learning steps, which are clearly understood by students and widely shared with their parents.
 - Goal setting at the school, grade and class level is guided by the use of the Inquiry Space data sheet. This collaborative approach focuses teacher team discussions and provides uniformity and consistency to the inquiry process. As a result, students' next learning steps are regularly identified, thus promoting increased proficiency.
 - School leaders and faculty focus attention on the achievement of annual and interim-based goals through collaborative, comprehensive, intervention plan development. These goals are driven by the school's coherent utilization of planning documents such as the Comprehensive Education Plan, Consolidated Youth Development Plan and the Learning Environment Survey. This good attention enables suitably high goals to be set for accelerated student learning.
- The principal has developed a collaborative school community that is firmly anchored within the analysis of data and student work. This has resulted in valuable adjustments to curriculum, instruction and student assessments.
 - Teacher teams use M-CLASS assessments for kindergarten through grade 3 and Developmental Reading Assessments coupled with "A-Z" online assessments for grades 4 through 8 in order to precisely set, monitor and adjust student goals and plan instruction. These efforts ensure that teachers play a major part in key decision making that positively affects student learning across the school.
 - The school's academic intervention team, which is comprised of specialists in English language learning, special education, English language arts and math, provide ongoing support for at-risk students and for level 2 students who are on the cusp of achieving grade-level success. All subgroups within the school, on all grade levels receive academic support to address their specific learning needs. These activities provide students with strategically planned instructional modalities best suited to meet their needs.
- Professional development opportunities are closely linked to current data trends, observed teacher practice and teacher interest surveys in order to further improve pedagogical practice and improve student learning outcomes.
 - Daily learning walks, teacher interest surveys, observation snapshots and the review of current formative assessments serve as the basis for strategic professional development offerings. As a result, instructional methodologies and techniques are refined to set targeted learning outcomes.
 - The school's commitment to the development of excellence in pedagogy is reflected in their use of the Professional Teaching Standards. The six narratives serve as the bedrock for adult learning. Collaborative lesson planning has led to school-wide alignment to rigorous standards-based instruction and the fostering of differentiated activities to address the student needs.
- Firmly entrenched structures are in place to regularly monitor, evaluate and modify content-area pacing schedules, unit plans, teacher practice and student-specific action plans.

- The school consistently uses the Core Knowledge nine week planning template, the Reading First Thematic Theme Studies, DIBELS and Developmental Reading Records, math unit assessment summaries, assessment action plans, in-house developed observation forms and interdisciplinary frameworks. All data collected is frequently analyzed by school leaders and faculty to best serve the needs of students.
- The analysis of the student-generated goal reflections is the embedded practice of teacher teams throughout the school. Ongoing school leader-to-teacher, teacher-to-student and teacher-to-parent conferences facilitate rich discussions, which in turn, lead to highly individualized student instructional support to deepen or accelerate learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Promote even greater consistency in differentiating instruction based on data, so that lesson planning reflects the purposeful grouping, differentiated activities, and targeted questioning that maximizes student learning.
 - The majority of teachers across grades and content areas utilize flexible grouping charts based on skill-specific areas of need. However, for subjects other than English language arts, math, social studies and science, teachers tend to group students less strategically and consequently, student learning is not maximized.
 - Project-based learning, which is intricately woven within a Core Knowledge program, provides many students with the appreciation of cross-curricular interrelationships. Nonetheless, project-based learning is not firmly in place in all classrooms. Consequently, not all students are profiting from these dynamic learning opportunities.
- Ensure greater uniformity in the teachers' use of progress monitoring tools and promote greater consistency in the school leader's monitoring and of these tools, to serve as the basis for recommendations for student support.
 - In grades 4 through 8, teachers pride themselves on their thorough knowledge of their students' current progress. However, some minor gaps are evident in the teachers' use of Developmental Assessment monitoring tools. Consequently, some students are tracked less closely than others.
 - Teachers are unsure as to how often school leaders monitor their utilization of progress monitoring tools such as Developmental Reading Assessment logs. As a result, some teachers are not receiving next-step support to either maintain or improve their monitoring of student progress.
- Encourage greater consistency in teacher feedback to students regarding their academic performance and refine mechanisms to communicate this information to parents.
 - Student work is replete with detailed teacher comments. However, small pockets of limited teacher feedback to students were found on pieces of student work and therefore, several students are unaware of the necessary steps to make performance gains.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: The Dumont School	Δ	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score				X
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?				X
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?			X	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?				X
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?				X
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?				X
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?			X	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.

<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?				X
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?				X
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?				X
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?			X	
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?				X
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?				X
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals 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 progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?				X
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?				X
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?				X
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X

Quality Review Scoring Key							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed