

Quality Review Report 2009-2010

Edward A. Reynolds West Side High School

High School 505

**140 West 102 street
New York
NY 10025**

Principal: Jean McTavish

Dates of review: May 5- 6, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Nancy Birson

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Edwards A. Reynolds West Side High School is a transfer high school with 563 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 33% Black, 64% Hispanic, 1% White, 1% Asian, and 1% Native American students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 is 63.6%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is underdeveloped with proficient features.

Edward A. Reynolds is a transfer high school designed to meet the needs of students who are over-aged and under-credited or drop-outs. It strives to create an environment where students feel welcomed and safe. One sees this concerted effort made by teachers and administrators as all are on a first name basis with students and warmly greet one another in classrooms and hallways. The school partners with community organizations that provide services to address the students' affective needs in an inclusive manner. Students are exposed to possible college or career tracks as options for their immediate futures.

Transfer schools are designed to re-engage students who are behind in high school or have dropped out. The essential elements of a Transfer school include: a personalized learning environment, rigorous academic standards, student-centered pedagogy, support to meet instructional and developmental goals, and a focus on connections to college. Since the principal has assumed leadership, this school has focused on all of these essential elements. Yet some of these areas are more developed in their implementation than others.

The principal has targeted the necessary changes for school improvement. She promotes active student involvement in the community thereby developing positive working relationships within the school community. While there is some understanding of expected outcomes to help the school move forward, there is not enough follow-through to determine if actions taken are delivering the hoped for, if not clearly articulated, expectations.

The school gathers school level data and has a trained lens on the assessment data for specific sub-groups in order to collect evidence of their performance. Although teacher teams conduct item analyses, they have yet to demonstrate a deepened understanding of how to use data to set team goals and benchmarks or determine the source of individual students' foundational skills' gaps. Knowledge is therefore largely defined for students as Regents preparation, despite larger school goals that focus on college readiness.

The staff defines student goals as increased credit accumulation, improved attendance and enhanced Regents' scores. There is a lack of measurable long-term or interim goals tied to these progress indicators in teacher team work as well as to the school's long-term strategic plans. Evidence of continuity, progression or next learning steps is uncertain to the staff. This has hindered the understanding and articulation of goals and progress by staff and students. Parental involvement is somewhat limited as many students are emancipated adults.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Collaborative relationships and critical supports are provided to facilitate the re-entry and retention of students in the school setting.
 - A social work curriculum enables interaction with students in classroom settings to address affective issues. Students are reintroduced and reoriented to a nurturing system in contrast to past interactions that may have been less than positive encounters. As a result, students eagerly attend these sessions thereby increasing the potential for discussion on a variety of issues that are of interest and concern.
 - Collaboration with outside organizations serves to provide students with opportunities for credit bearing courses. Students also learn culinary skills as they cook meals from scratch and participate in “Teen Iron Chef” competitions. Students are energized by the exposure to healthy decision making options and alternative career choices. One student traveled to Washington, D.C. to co-present at the Child Nutrition Pre-Authorization Conference before Congress.
- A welcoming, supportive and inclusive environment is very much in evidence, supported by the “family feeling” that permeates the positive school atmosphere.
 - The school’s policies and treatment of students deliver the message of firm, fair and consistent discipline. This creates a safe learning environment for all students. The neighborhood structure of the “family group” provides students with weekly opportunities to interact with fellow students in fun and engaging activities. Students appreciate getting to know one another. As one student stated “We have fun with one another and with our teachers – this is the best.”
- Professional collaboration is a high priority and faculty profit from varied opportunities to share and develop strengths as individuals and members of the teaching community.
 - Regularly scheduled teacher team meetings are strengthening structures for collaboration and a deeper analysis of student needs, with the majority of teachers involved in this work. One team is questioning why students are not learning what has been taught. This has resulted in discussion around multiple strategies and approaches to teaching content and looking at strategies to meet students’ unique modes of learning.
 - Consultant support and guidance to teams provides opportunities for leadership as teachers confidently rotate responsibility for implementation of new ideas and presentation of successes and challenges to the larger group. Two teachers on a team presented on skills taught through multiple approaches as others shared wonderings and reflections on the methodologies.
- Staff gathers a range of relevant data across most subjects for sub-groups in order to understand sub-group performance and progress.
 - Data analysis of school-level data for sub-groups has led to a more focused view of student outcomes for these groups. Teachers are provided with data items for

each student, as well as individualized education plans, attendance and Regents' outcomes in all subject areas. The school has taken a more proactive approach to data gathering as opposed to waiting for State and City reports.

- The school maintains a supportive learning environment that conveys high expectations through its promotion of active involvement with the school and the community.
 - Students are involved in school activities geared towards college awareness and community involvement and beautification. The community garden project has served not only to foster civic responsibility, but to link classroom learning to applied learning in the community. This has engendered student voice in school decision making as they are actively involved in the planning and development of the project from the start to finish.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine the approach to organizational decisions schoolwide so as to coherently support the consistency of instruction in all classrooms and success of all students.
 - The school has various programs in place to support student learning, implementing some initiatives that are new and shedding others that have not shown to be helpful. Some of these initiatives are aiding students in recovering credits and getting back on track to graduation. However, the link between these efforts and the improvement of instruction across classroom is still developing.
 - Teachers provide one period per day to family group which is designed to develop supportive, trusting relationships that address not only student social-emotional needs, but academics as well. Students work independently on monitoring credit accumulation. They are referred to optional tutoring sessions, although one student stated that it was his only opportunity to get the support he needs. There is, as yet, not enough evidence of the impact of these efforts on the school's instructional goals and student-related outcomes.
- Augment the work of teacher teams so that the consistent implementation of instructional and assessment initiatives, and impact regarding larger school goals, are monitored across teams and classrooms.
 - Although teachers and teams have revised assessment practices, including checklists for content and skills to set learning targets for individual students, the principal acknowledges that the consistent use and quality of these tools is still developing. The review of data and trends from these assessments across classrooms is therefore also taking root. Additionally, some teachers are unclear as to how short term school and teacher team goals fit into the school's long-term strategic plans, which has lead to some student confusion as to the purpose of assigned tasks.
- Broaden the range of formal and informal assessments to provide consistent, clear and uniform feedback that assists students in determining next learning steps.
 - Feedback to students is in the form of grades, checkmarks, or some newly implemented rubric use that focuses on learning as opposed to work completion. At present, rubrics across classes and disciplines lack consistency in pinpointing next learning steps for students and skills inventories or checklists used by teachers are not yet shared with the students so they can self assess. One

classroom uses post-it notes with comments such as “consistency” and “attendance” as areas for improvement. Therefore, when students reflect on progress they see it as “I followed directions and got a B” or “...to become stronger, it will take a lot of hard work”.

- Refine and share long and short-term goals and targets, and define action plans and the timeframe for achieving these objectives, in order to measure progress.
 - The school’s 2009/2010 Comprehensive Education Plan reflects the 2007/2008 Quality Review recommendations for curriculum development, which has provided the school with a basic structure. However, some teachers presently view curriculum design as planning from the “lowest students’ point of view” while others have a different perspective on the right approach. In the absence of collaborative and measurable, long term and interim goals with shared action plans, staff is not always sure regarding implementation strategies, roles and review dates.
 - The school has focused its goals on improving credit accumulation, attendance, and Regents’ scores, though without clear targets due to a highly transitory population from year to year. The school also has long range aspirations to increase college-readiness and wellness of students. The leadership reviews numerous data points as a way of judging improvement, however, benchmarks for success are not clearly established in planning, which makes efforts to monitor initiatives, and make timely adjustments, less effective.
- Use the data from observations and classroom visits to develop goals and plans that reflect and support the teachers’ need for differentiated professional growth and target improved achievement of students.
 - The school presently observes teachers formally and informally, and teachers are expected to utilize the school-wide template for lesson planning. However, feedback is centered solely on the delivery of the lesson. Class sizes typically range from 15-20 students on any given day, and while students may work in small groups or pairs, it is not clear how these groupings are determined. At present, there is inconsistency in the formal follow-up or lack of clarity of the timeline for implementation of recommendations.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: The Edward A. Reynolds High 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>	△	➤	✓	+			
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>	△	➤	✓	+			
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>	△	➤	✓	+			
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							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed