



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

**Quality Review Report
Division of Accountability and Achievement Resources
2009-2010**

Quality Review Report 2009-2010

Marsh Avenue School for Expeditionary Learning

**Middle School 063
100 Essex Drive
Staten Island
NY 10314**

Principal: Jessica Jenkins-Milona

Dates of review: March 15 – 16, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Rose-Marie Mills

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Marsh Avenue School for Expeditionary Learning is a middle school with 288 students from grade 6 through grade 7. The school population comprises 17% Black, 22% Hispanic, 54% White, and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 23% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 95.1%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Marsh Avenue Expeditionary Learning School is in its second year of existence and will expand to grade eight in fall 2010, as it develops into a full middle school. The school's goals result from in-depth data analysis and guide school improvement initiatives. A solid partnership with New York Outward Bounds/Expeditionary Learning results in the provision of valuable professional development to teachers and real world projects, called learning expeditions, for students. Students appreciate belonging to "a crew", small advisory groups with an advisor, thereby ensuring that their needs are well known and supported by an adult.

Parents are ecstatic with the atmosphere of collaboration that exists, and share the high expectations of the enthusiastic principal and teachers. Additionally, their inclusion in student-led conferences, meetings that require students to present work and reflect on the learning process, further engages them in the education of their children. The school consistently shares detailed instructional information with parents at the beginning of units of study. Effective, reciprocal communications allows parents to be true partners in education. Many parents indicate that the experience at Marsh Avenue has "changed their perception of public schools" in a positive way."

Data collection and analysis is one of the hallmarks of Marsh Avenue. Students have content area student assessment notebooks that illustrate requisite learning targets, accomplishments, and helps them successfully reflect on the learning process. Teachers also own assessment notebooks that detail the accomplishments of students on learning targets. The use of these tools result in clarity on individual student accomplishment, and there is evidence throughout that this information is used to differentiate instruction in the planning process. However, the notebooks do not enable the easy identification of trends in the performance of subgroups thus hindering prompt classroom adjustments.

Frequent review of trends in students' performance results in necessary adjustments to ensure the accomplishment of school-wide goals. Exemplary instruction is a work in progress as the school grows and trains staff on consistently implementing effective strategies, and creating meaningful tasks that engage all students. Some lessons are exemplary, while others lack rigor and do not meaningfully engage all students. Likewise, the absence of technology instruction and inconsistent use of effective questioning, results in uneven levels of student engagement.

Whereas teacher teams exist in the school, teacher leadership development is emerging. Some teams have leaders in place, while other teams are still grappling with this process. Clear structures to sustain facilitative leadership are not yet embedded resulting in the principal providing a majority of the professional supports. Limited capacity building reduces the schools' ability to maximize teacher growth and further accelerate student outcome.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders have established a strong collaborative learning community with high expectations for student achievement.
 - Parents are true partners in the educational process and opportunities for participation abounds. In addition to regular report card meetings, parents engage in two student-led conferences that result in all students reflecting on their learning. In addition, parents consistently receive information on units of study and resources that they can utilize to assist students at home thereby solidifying the high level of expectation that the school demonstrates.
 - Helpful workshops, held at convenient times, facilitate parent involvement in school programs. Parents receive training on anti-bullying. As a result, parents are aware of the signs of bullying and learn how to help their children avert this behavior. Learning about ‘expeditions’, provides parents with a keen sense of its purpose, learning targets, and ways to support their children in mastering the learning targets.
- The school effectively gathers and analyzes formative and summative data to set relevant school-wide goals that serve as a catalyst for improvement.
 - Extensive summer planning involving staff, administrators, and New York Outward Bound partners, included a thorough analysis of school data and the creation of relevant goals to increase differentiated instructional strategies, increase inquiry work, and increase teachers’ use of assessment data to plan for small group instruction. These goals, explicit in the Comprehensive Educational Plan, are successfully leading school planning.
 - The school leadership team and parent association are integrally involved in school planning activities. Additionally, all parents receive regular correspondence on school goals and the efforts being put forth to guide school improvement, resulting in high levels of support.
- Solid partnerships provide strategic support for students and accelerate their academic and personal growth.
 - A strong collaboration with New York Outward Bounds/Expeditionary Learning provides staff with curriculum integration supports, resources, and professional development that focus on supporting the holistic needs of students. As a result, students participate and benefit from expeditions and project-based learning opportunities that foster both academic and emotional growth. As stated by one student “expeditions make us practice what we learn and be creative.”
 - The school successfully collaborates with key mental health organizations to provide a high level of social-emotional assistance for students. Parents

appreciate the expediency of referrals that result in interventions that promote improvement in student behavior and academic achievement.

- Frequent monitoring of trends in assessment data matched with school-wide goals result in requisite adjustments thus ensuring school success.
 - The principal's constant scrutiny of student performance data on ARIS, review of students' report cards, and teachers' assessment notebooks, ensure that projected goals and actual attainment are in tandem. Inconsistencies in students' academic performance as seen on report cards resulted in the implementation of afterschool classes to help students attain success.
 - Teacher teams and individual teachers continually review their assessment notebooks and student work to evaluate individual and student subgroup progress towards meeting interim academic goals. During weekly professional development activities, teachers keep a keen eye on student progress as they focus on strategies that address student needs, and modifying their practices to improve student outcomes.
- School leadership successfully establishes a safe and inclusive school culture that supports the holistic development of adolescents.
 - Administrators purposefully analyze the outcomes of the Learning Environment Survey to identify the concerns of the school community. In response to issues around bullying, an anti-bullying program that incorporates activities for both students and parents is in place. Parents participate in workshops on the signs of bullying and ways they can help the school in reducing this behavior, while students create graphic murals with anti-bullying messages and 'no name calling' week. Administrators, students, and parents indicate the activities create a greater awareness of and are reducing bullying behavior in the school.
 - Students welcome the inclusion of Crew, the school's advisory program, which gives them opportunities to participate in service learning and improve their academics through daily reading support. Valuable time is spent reviewing their SAN, resulting in individual plans that are supportive of improving their work.
- The school's ardent commitment to inclusiveness results in a highly engaged students and a parent community that supports achievement.
 - School celebratory activities, such as honor roll and awards ceremonies involve parents and reinforce the schools' mission to actively engage all constituents. Furthermore, the sharing of detailed progress reports, in addition to traditional report cards, facilitates reciprocal discussions with parents on student attainment, next steps, and opportunities for needed assistance.
 - The integration of student assessment notebooks into school structures, compel students to reflect on tasks completed and what they have learned. After the attainment of learning targets, students complete reflection logs in their notebooks, and explain the steps that help them achieve the learning target. Students indicate that this process makes them aware of how they learn, self-assess, and improve their achievement.

What the school needs to improve

- Enhance teachers' skills in delivering lessons by providing training that focuses on effective questioning and creating suitable tasks that appropriately engage all learners.
 - Staff members receive training on effective delivery of differentiated instruction however, the expertise of teachers varies. The marked differences in staff proficiency lead to classroom activities that do not adequately engage students, especially higher achievers.
 - The school encourages the use of the workshop model of instruction but some teachers grapple with timing the parts of this model. Mini-lessons are at times too long, and questioning does not encourage student-to-student discourse that promotes higher-order thinking thus lowering the level of student engagement.
- Establish clear leadership structures in all teacher teams and engage them in collaboratively creating benchmark assessments, thereby improving pedagogy, expanding capacity, and accelerating student outcomes.
 - Teacher teams meet on a regular basis and solid discussions on student performance and the sharing of instructional practice takes place. However, teams have not yet established collaborative efforts in the compilation of common assessments. The social studies team leader singularly creates common tests for the team thereby impeding other teachers' developing expertise in designing authentic assessments.
 - Although multiple teacher teams exist, distributive leadership structures in the school are emerging. The social studies team has an established leader, but leadership structures in other teams are not confirmed. This inconsistency inhibits capacity building in a school that is increasing in student population.
- Improve the data analysis tool so that trends in the performance of subgroups are easily identified with the purpose of making swift classroom level and school-wide adjustments.
 - Teachers' use an assessment notebook to maintain and analyze qualitative and quantitative data for each of their students. This allows them to know the strengths and weaknesses of individuals. However, the large amount of paper does not allow for the quick aggregation of the data for student subgroups and by class, thereby delaying essential instructional decisions.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: Marsh Avenue Expeditionary Learning 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
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