



**Department of  
Education**

*Joel I. Klein, Chancellor*

**Quality Review Report  
Division of Performance and Accountability  
2010-2011**

# **Quality Review Report 2010-2011**

**Alfred E. Smith**

**Elementary School 163**

**163 West 97<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York  
NY 10025**

**Principal: Dr. Virginia Pepe**

**Dates of review: February 8 – 9, 2011**

**Lead Reviewer: Sara Carvajal**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Alfred E. Smith is an elementary school with 636 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 26% Black, 43% Hispanic, 25% White, 3% Asian, and 1% multiracial students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 94.8%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school has rooted effective structures for monitoring teaching with a clear focus on improving instructional practices.
  - Each administrator is responsible for the direct supervision of a specific grade cluster, using a classroom snapshot as the primary tool for systematic, ongoing feedback to teachers regarding their implementation of the workshop model. The outcomes of periodic lesson study and the analysis of student writing across content areas during quarterly goal-setting meetings offer additional data streams that position school leaders to efficiently evaluate and support teachers over time. As a result, the vast majority of teachers benefit from immediate feedback throughout the year that prompts them to self-assess and refine their pedagogy.
- School leadership makes informed and effective instructional and organizational decisions that support improvements in learning.
  - In the face of fiscal cutbacks, the principal strategically has secured a core team of effective, part-time retirees to provide a wide-array of direct services during the regular school day to select groups of students, including math intervention and Spanish language arts instruction. Additionally, the principal compensates for the recent loss of full-time, academic support personnel by capitalizing on the school's extended day program in a highly focused fashion. The program targets students who demonstrate academic struggles, as per the State assessments, providing additional small-group English language arts instruction during three mornings and supplemental math tutoring over two afternoons weekly. In this way, the school aligns key resources with school-wide goals for academic improvement in core subject areas, and struggling students benefit from intense support in small class size settings.
- Teachers consistently organize and analyze a broad range of data to understand individual student and relevant subgroup performance, progress and learning needs.
  - Individual teachers and teacher teams in grades 3 through 5 continually reflect on data analyses, which compare annual State test outcomes in English language arts and math to yearlong student progress as noted on quarterly running records, periodic on-demand writing samples, and end-of-unit math tests. As a result, teachers have become adept at surfacing key factors, such as the limited vocabularies of English language learners and students with disabilities, which obstruct student performance on assorted assessments. Consequently, the school has initiated several revisions to curricula and teaching practice that provide struggling students with small-group focused intensives, beginning in the earlier grades.
- School leaders do an exceptional job in using a wide array of assessment data to diagnose school-wide needs, and consequently, set actionable goals and plan for high leverage instructional supports for all students.
  - The school analyzes a plethora of data streams, including the multi-faceted Progress Report, Acuity interim outcomes, classroom snapshot information, running records, incident trends, and attendance patterns, forming a

comprehensive portrait of the school's strengths and current needs. School leaders utilize the data to sift out the quarterly performance and progress trends of its lagging students. As a result, student groupings for English as a second language, small-group intervention services, and extended day assignments, are periodically reviewed and strategically modified.

- Teachers collaborate regularly to examine student work, plan together and visit each other's classrooms to share ideas and best practice, through a desire to improve student outcomes.
  - All hands are on deck as the entire staff immerses itself in addressing an observed disparity between State summative scores and recent outcomes of the school's running record initiative. In particular, teachers and administrators have identified that the former school-wide formative reading assessment was not sufficiently challenging in evaluating, and subsequently, developing the students' comprehension needs across all grades. Therefore, teachers are positioned to take the reins and now meet regularly in grade-wide teams to lift the rigor of their quarterly reading assessments via an inferential questioning focus. Additionally, teachers are also currently seeking out better matches for texts used in reading assessment. As a result of this common thrust of inquiry, teachers are noticing that the responses of the school's struggling readers on formative assessments in reading and writing are becoming more detailed and text-supported.
- The school is a secure place where students are engaged in learning and appreciate the superior level of support they receive for their personal and academic development.
  - The site continually affords students with social challenges the opportunity to shine through its wide variety of long-standing arts partnerships. The chess program develops students' logic and reasoning with skills that are transferable to critical thinking across subject areas. Additionally, volunteer mentors from assorted local organizations provide targeted students with individualized guidance in learning life skills, such as prioritizing and making wise choices. The school's substance abuse prevention and intervention specialist partners with the physical education teacher to infuse the Healthy Me curriculum, and initiates classroom culture lessons that build positive self-esteem and promote anti-bullying to students across the grades. As a result, students benefit from an inclusive environment, driven by school spirit and responsible behavior, which addresses the students' varying emotional needs in a highly differentiated manner.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Refine goal-setting structures so that tangible, progress feedback is owned by students empowering them to effectively self-monitor their progress yearlong.
  - In addition to setting goals in English language arts and math for the lowest one-third of students across all grades, teams of teachers meet to develop assessment rubrics for projects in most subject areas. However, communication of these findings may not be understood and some students and their families, at times, are uncertain of what they should do at home to support performance at school.
- Refine action planning by developing interim benchmarks for school-wide plans so that progress is measured, readjustments made, and success evaluated.

- Recently, the school has begun to employ Department of Education-supported processes, such as the development of the School Self-Evaluation Form (SSEF) and network-led mock Quality Reviews, to evaluate the appropriateness of its current school-wide goals. However, the school has not yet established a clear system for revisiting its Comprehensive Educational Plan with the school leadership team at interim checkpoints throughout the school year. Consequently, the full leadership team does not consistently influence formal revisions to school-wide goals throughout the year.
- Develop further coherence and alignment in the school's curriculum with key State standards to ensure that all students make progress in their learning of the content areas.
  - The school has worked diligently to create a repository of rigorous interdisciplinary social studies and science units for all grades, using a 'backward design' approach. These units infuse appropriate literary resources, technology applications, and arts complements, to constantly address the identified needs of English language learners and lower achieving students. In addition, Bloom's taxonomy underpins varied questioning that drives the concrete understanding of subject matter by students. However, at this time, the school does not consistently demonstrate that teachers refine units of study to maximize the academic challenge for higher achieving students.
- Deepen differentiation of instruction so that lessons engage all students and offer suitable challenge at every level across all curriculum areas.
  - The school has made great strides in consistently analyzing data and planning instruction that effectively supports the majority of its lower achieving students. At this time, however, the school does not always assure that higher-achieving students are completing extension learning experiences when they have completed their tasks. As a result, some advanced students at times, are not fully engaged in challenging work.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: Alfred E. Smith	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score			X	
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
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
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
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 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, 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	

<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
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				
<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
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			
<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
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				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed