

# Quality Review Report 2010-2011

**The St. Albans Elementary School**

**Elementary School Q036**

**187- 01 Foch Boulevard  
Queens  
NY 11412**

**Principal: Lynn Staton**

**Dates of review: March 21 – 22, 2011**

**Lead Reviewer: Lenon Murray**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The St. Albans School is an elementary school with 470 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 87% Black, 6% Hispanic, 4% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 10% 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 92.0%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school uses rigorous and coherent curricula across core subjects that emanate from State standards and target a wide variety of learners to improve their performance.
  - The data specialist and grade level teacher teams have extracted key State standards that they believe align most closely to the standardized tests. This has led them to supplement their balanced literacy curriculum with word study, explicit vocabulary instruction and comprehension strategies for struggling students. Teachers report that their lowest performing students are doing better on unit tests.
  - Teachers concluded from work outcomes that a majority of students need increased practice in solving math word problems. Using Everyday Math and a more rigorous Progress in Math, the curricula had a more focused study of important topics and required students to summarize their understanding in their own words after each new math topic. This resulted in more than 70 percent of students showing improved understanding of math vocabulary.
- Teacher pedagogy reflects a consistent belief in educating the whole child using systematic differentiation and student engagement to enhance student performance.
  - Across classrooms teachers deliver their lessons using a workshop model of a planned, explicit mini-lesson followed by guided practice and individual practice of concepts that were taught. Teachers use flexible and skill-based groupings and model demonstrations tailored to student needs. In a lower grade cooking lesson, some students were able to select, measure and combine ingredients to make a vegetable and fruit salad while other students needed support from their peers. This constant effort at differentiation has led to a general level of student engagement as evidenced in original poems and compositions of varying complexity written by students.
- The school leadership and faculty make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals while meeting students' learning needs.
  - Teacher teams meet weekly during the school day to plan and organize their instruction using an inquiry approach. The data specialist is also the academic coach and shares expertise with the teams on a rotating basis and is pivotal in supporting the academic intervention teachers in developing their expertise. This has resulted in the early identification of struggling students and a more focused intervention on their behalf resulting in measurable improvements on math unit tests.
  - Struggling students are tutored during the extended day and coached during the school day by their teachers in small groups. Teachers use questioning techniques that challenge their students to solve problems using the information found in their texts. As a result, students are making more accurate inferences as measured by their periodic assessments.
- The school leadership and faculty align assessments directly to curriculum and analyze student data to enable teachers to adjust instructional decisions in their teams and classrooms.

- Staff use, with support from administrators, a range of student performance data to inform lesson planning. Additionally, teachers monitor their teaching by comparing student performance on a variety of assessment results to verify the rate of student learning. Students with disabilities, English language learners and boys are monitored on unit tests and interim assessments in English language arts. They have generally performed less well than girls on making inferences and understanding character traits. This has resulted in early intervention for these identified students with teachers providing greater targeted support in the classroom and in extended tutorials.
- The school leadership uses classroom observations and a common instructional focus based on literacy mastery to improve its instructional practices while promoting professional reflection and growth among its teachers.
  - Teachers develop professional goals aligned with State standards, students' needs and a focus on teaching students how to read and write at high levels. These individualized goals include expectations for student performance. As a result, teachers engage in weekly team meetings that support a focus on improving student outcomes based on identified student needs.
  - School leaders provide a range of supports to teachers that include one-on-one conferencing, collaboration with the coach, and mentors for newer teachers to promote professional growth. Administrators meet with teachers regularly to review classroom data and action plans to ensure that teacher practice is meeting identified student needs. Teachers have expressed that the administration is approachable and amenable to suggestions for changes in lesson presentation. As a result, teachers feel supported in their personal goals and free to reflect on practical improvements they can use immediately.
- The school has a coherent vision of its evolving future that is reflected in its focused, data-based goals that promote student achievement.
  - The school's needs assessment indicated a weakness in math performance that was addressed by short and long term goals to increase math achievement. The school also modified their curriculum to facilitate instructional coherence in math across the school and emphasize crucial vocabulary and strategic approaches. This has led to better math results throughout the year.
  - The school leaders use every available parent forum to promote a learning community among parents that better supports the academic improvement of children. Parents ask questions and provide direct suggestions to teachers and administrators on school goals. Teachers actively support the school goals with their input at faculty and grade conferences and in informal conversations with school leadership. Both parents and teachers are acutely aware of the basic needs of the school. This focus includes an emphasis on independent reading for longer periods of time leading to greater stamina and an expanded academic vocabulary. As a result, parents and teachers feel ownership of the school's improvement efforts.

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

- Increase the information sharing and open communication of students' learning needs and outcomes with students and families to improve parent participation and student performance.
  - School administrators, the data specialist and the parent coordinator arrange and conduct regular workshops for parents on ARIS parent link, web-based resources for their children and the content of the curriculum. Teachers take responsibility for communicating with families about student progress between report cards and prospects for promotion to the next grade. Teachers send notes home or reach out by phone or email. However, the level of detail shared with parents is insufficient and hinders to enlist the active support of families in students' next steps to increase performance.
- Improve the tracking of student progress and the provision of feedback to families that is directly related to the achievement of student learning goals to enhance their achievement.
  - The school uses DYO assessments that directly track student progress in literacy and math. The school decided to embed most of its academic intervention in the classroom and devolve the responsibility to the classroom teacher to provide this intervention. Teachers take responsibility for monitoring the progress toward learning goals and discuss student performance with parents in personal appointments and by phone or email. This adjustment has been shared with families even though there is insufficient evidence that this feedback is understood and used on a regular basis. This has led to teachers taking major responsibility for students achieving their goals and parents assuming a passive role in student achievement.
- Target the provision of additional professional development that would promote greater personal reflection, self-evaluation and self-initiated improvement in classroom practice.
  - The school has a rotating schedule of professional development to teacher teams. Teachers have been exposed to the evolving State standards. Some of the professional development has been job embedded and has led to active implementation of suggested teaching strategies. Teachers have been taking leadership roles on their grade levels. Distributed leadership, while visible on some teams, is not yet deeply embedded in all collaborations, thereby limiting the success of all teams in promoting improvement in classroom practice.
- Use data with greater precision to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher teams and leadership development to improve teacher performance.
  - School leaders review teacher action plans and work with network facilitators to develop team agendas and focus. The data specialist and school administrators connect with individual team members to informally discuss relevant issues. As this is not a deep systemic practice, it does not necessarily lead to actionable next steps and sufficiently improve teacher performance.
  - School leaders review the leadership performance of teachers on teacher teams as a part of their inquiry team conversations. They readily send teachers for additional professional development upon their request and provide feedback to promising teacher leaders. Administrators express confidence in their teacher leaders and provide them with additional responsibilities. However, the work of the teacher team leaders struggles to impact teacher performance in a more direct way when delivering instruction.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

<b>School name: The St. Albans School</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?			<b>X</b>	
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			<b>X</b>	
<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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			<b>X</b>	
2.2 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			<b>X</b>	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends?			<b>X</b>	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?		<b>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.**

<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	

**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>	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	

**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>	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	

**Quality Review Scoring Key**

<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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