



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

Marsh Avenue Expeditionary Learning School

R063

**100 Essex Drive
Staten Island
NY 10314**

Principal: Jessica Jenkins-Milona

Dates of review: March 23 - 24, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Aimee Horowitz

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Marsh Avenue School for Expeditionary Learning is a middle school with 430 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 13% Black, 21% Hispanic, 57% White, and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 20% 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 95%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The curriculum offers students a wide range of rigorous experiences and choices including the arts, during and after school, to facilitate students' ownership of learning.
 - In all classes students use Costa's Levels of Inquiry to craft high level questions to question text and one another. Students build on one another's responses to critical thinking questions, readily agree and disagree, explain why, and cite textual evidence to support their responses leading to an increase in students' writing scores as evidenced by their consistent progress towards attaining a level 4 on a school wide writing rubric.
 - Concerns over meeting the needs of high performing and other student subgroups to engage students in learning experiences that appropriately challenge them, led the school to create and administer uniform pre-assessments for each unit, to group students based on readiness, to use leveled texts and tasks for each group, and to use curriculum compacting for high achieving students. Teacher team created unit post test scores in core subjects indicate that subgroups of students continue to make consistent progress over time.
- Well planned differentiation of instruction consistently enables all students to access rich learning experiences that are challenging and meet their defined needs.
 - Across classrooms teacher tier and scaffold instruction; based on pre-assessment and other data, students use appropriate leveled texts, leveled graphic organizers, manipulatives, and visuals enabling each student to access the lesson from many points to successfully achieve the learning target.
 - Interdisciplinary learning expeditions provide students with multiple opportunities to engage in tasks including researching, writing, and revising over extended time periods. Students drafts assignments, peer edit and tune other's work, and assess and reflect on their own work and process of learning. For the 7th grade social studies expedition, students' work culminated in a book, "America: How we came to be" that they presented to the community at a local bookstore.
- The principal's informed and highly effective organizational decisions across all aspects of the school support growth in adult and student learning.
 - Time is scheduled for departments to engage in collaborative planning, for teachers' intervisitation, and for weekly Instructional Core meetings, during which team leaders collaborate with the principal and coach to plan department meetings in which student work is analyzed. Thus, all teachers effectively differentiate instruction to meet the needs of student subgroups resulting in improved student scholarship as evidenced by scores on writing assessments, teacher created unit post tests, and periodic assessments.
 - Special and general education teachers are intentionally paired to support teacher development and student progress. 8th grade students self select an

enrichment elective. Common planning time is built into all teachers' schedules, grade level advisors support students' social-emotional development, and grade level crew leads meet to plan for crew. These structures foster teacher accountability for student growth and achievement of school wide goals.

- Through the use of a wide variety of relevant data, leaders and faculty have an in depth understanding of the performance, progress, and needs of individuals and subgroups which effectively informs instruction and organizational adjustments.
 - The school consistently analyzes data from teacher team created pre-assessments, periodic assessments, end of unit tests, exit slips, and other formative and summative data to evaluate subgroup performance, to reflect on prior instruction, to modify curriculum maps, and to target instruction to meet the needs of each subgroup. All teams design instruction and assessments to build on deficits in last year's scores as well as to address current deficiencies based on teacher team created end of unit assessments.
- Relationships across the school are warm, supportive, and inclusive of students, teachers, and parents who feel valued and take great pride in being members of the closely-knit school community.
 - The school regularly informs parents of their child's individual goals and provides them and their children with on-line and in-school resources to support them in understanding and in helping their child achieve their goals. Communication with parents occurs via email, phone calls, an on-line grading system, and through student led and parent teacher conferences. Parents report that individual student assessment notebooks presented at student led conferences make students accountable for their learning and greatly aid them understanding their children's progress towards achieving their goals.
 - Parents report that the school consistently engages them in setting, refining, and assessing progress towards meeting school wide goals, to which they are deeply committed. Consequently, they share with school leaders and faculty the high expectations they have for all students.
- The school has implemented effective systems for monitoring teacher practice with a clear focus on improving instructional practices and increasing student outcomes.
 - Comprehending non-fiction texts to more effectively write non-fiction, creating and responding to high level critical thinking questions, and supporting responses with specific and relevant evidence create a consistent focus across classrooms. As a result student assignments include reading and writing non-fiction in all content areas, building comprehension and fostering college readiness.
 - Teachers are placed in flexible professional development cohorts based on levels of implementation and experience in differentiating instruction as assessed through observation and teacher reflection. Newer teachers are also supported by the instructional core and in-school professional development based on teacher need. For example, following a walkthrough, the principal realized that a group of teachers needed assistance creating effective and engaging lesson closings. Thus, there was a workshop on closings followed by observations, teacher self assessments of and reflections focusing on closings and another round of observations. Teachers self select outside professional development based on interest and need.

- Teachers regularly collaborate to analyze student work, plan together, and visit each other's classrooms to share ideas and best practices with the goal of improving student outcomes.
 - Every teacher is a member of a department team that meets regularly to improve instruction to support and increase student learning. For example, the math department met to analyze exit cards from the 8th grade integrated algebra class to determine students' strengths and weaknesses, to inform their teaching for the next day, and to determine how the 6th and 7th grade curriculum should be revised to support the development of skills necessary for success in integrated algebra.
 - The instructional core meets regularly to enhance distributed leadership. In one core meeting, grade leaders modeled a protocol for analyzing student work to look for trends, to determine next teaching and learning steps, and to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching strategies. Because the school is intentionally building teacher leadership, they ensure that all teachers are trained and have opportunities to facilitate professional discussions around analyzing student work to improve teacher practice and improve student learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to build upon tools that enable parents to provide the school with meaningful feedback to enhance student learning and family engagement.
 - Though the school engages families in using various tools to understand student achievement including ARIS, an online grading program, and the school's recently enhanced website, regular opportunities for parents to provide the school with feedback about specific student learning experiences are not yet embedded in practice resulting in low and inconsistent parent participation when opportunities are offered.
- Develop partnerships to provide students with additional academic and real world learning experiences.
 - The school's partnership with Outward Bound, the crew class, and grade level advisors are highly effective in supporting students' social-emotional and academic development. Increasing partnerships with community organizations will enhance students' opportunities for additional real world and service learning experiences.
- Ensure that students understand the impact of attendance and behavioral information on their learning.
 - As a result of teacher feedback and the systemic use of individual student assessment notebooks (SANS), students have a deep understanding of academic data and the next learning steps they need to take to achieve their interim and long term goals. Expand the use of SANS to include attendance and behavior data to increase student awareness of its impact on scholarship.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: Marsh Avenue Expeditionary Learning School	UD	D	P	WD
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>	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
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>	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	

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							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed