

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Ethan Allen

Elementary-Middle School 306

970 VERMONT STREET
BROOKLYN
NY 11207

Principal: LAWRENCE BURROUGHS

Dates of review: March 5th - 6th, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Yvette Donald

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Ethan Allen is an elementary-middle school with 682 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 71% Black, 20% Hispanic, and 8% other students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 89.6%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is underdeveloped.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Structured professional collaboration is the vehicle to examine student work and analyze assessments in an attempt to share ideas and instructional practices with an eye toward improving student outcomes. (4.2)
 - The principal has ensured all teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations by scheduling weekly meetings on each grade level. During this time teacher teams, with the support of their Network, are now beginning to implement a structured protocol for reviewing student work. Teachers are now starting to identify gaps in student learning and share strategies and resources. As a result, teachers are now leaving the meeting with ideas and resources they implement in their classrooms.
- School staff is developing the practice of using tools to organize student data to be able to identify trends so that there is an understanding of student performance. (2.3)
 - The school staff gathers data via various resources, including student summative, periodic, and classroom level assessments in order to make after-school and programmatic decisions. The data specialist and administration are beginning to use tools, such as ARIS reports and school-developed spreadsheets to aggregate this information and distribute them amongst the instructional cabinet and to staff, providing faculty with baseline data to begin making decisions. A few teachers are also developing the practice of organizing student in-class test results on charts. This budding practice enables administration and teachers to view data at a glance and identify trends and patterns in student performance.
- Administration is beginning to gather and analyze a range of data to determine the needs of the school in order to inform instructional support and organizational decisions. (2.1)
 - School leaders review State exam results, Learning Environment Survey, (LES), results, attendance, periodic assessments, and classroom reading level results. These data help administration determine areas of success and challenges for the school. Based on State exam results, after-school and early morning academic intervention classes were established. Classroom reading levels are used to develop differentiated work packets to be completed during extended school breaks, including the summer. In addition, teacher responses on the LES led to the re-organization and change of responsibilities of the assistant principals (AP). Teachers indicated that they were not being supported by their direct supervisor. This led to a re-assignment of roles and responsibilities of the assistant principals in an effort to better align the strengths of each administrator. As a result, academic and professional supports for students and teachers, show greater alignment to the understood strengths and needs of the school.
- School-wide goals reflect the general needs of the school and lead to emerging efforts to increase student learning. (3.1)
 - The school's short list of goals emanates from a broad analysis of students' summative and formative test results, along with attendance and behavioral data. These goals, which reflect a general understanding of the school's needs, also

incorporate the Citywide instructional expectations. As a result, there are guidelines and plans in place that serve as rudimentary steps toward school-wide improvements in student learning outcomes.

What the school needs to improve

- Establish a standards-based literacy curriculum with identified key standards that reflects academic tasks and learning experiences to meet the needs of all students, particularly English language learners and students with disabilities. (1.1)
 - o The school recently adopted a new literacy program, which they are using, along with other resources, to provide instruction to students across the grades. While aligned to National early literacy standards, it does not reflect a direct connection to New York State Standards or the higher expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards. In addition, administrators and staff have not yet organized and structured the program components into a coherent instructional plan, with identified key standards in the core subject areas to ensure academic progress. Furthermore, the academic tasks inconsistently offer high levels of rigor and do not reflect accommodations or modifications based on the learning needs of the school's student population. As a result, this hinders students, particularly those with the most academic struggles, from progressing on a consistent basis.
- Ensure that teaching practices and routines coherently align to curricula so that beliefs about how students learn are reflected in teaching strategies in order to engage and expand the thinking of all students (1.2)
 - o Although the staff expressed the belief that student-to-student discussions, student led learning experiences, and data-informed groupings are the anchors that guides their teaching, the observed classroom practices did not offer sufficient evidence to substantiate. Students are provided little to no opportunity to pose questions, discuss their learning or extend their thinking. Learning tasks and activities were not based on students' prior knowledge data or address academic gaps, but instead are reflective of generic programmatic plans. .In addition, students frequently worked on worksheets or on a set of problems after receiving a direct whole-group instruction. However, there was no evidence of teachers conferring or checking for understanding during independent work time. The implementation of these generalized practices limits students from engaging in well-matched learning tasks that allow development of critical thinking skills, thus hindering accelerating student progress.
- Align instructional and organizations decisions to schools goals so the use of resources result in improvements in student outcomes. (1.3)
 - o The school has invested in technology devices for most elementary and middle school classrooms to support its goals of building students' comprehension skills and offering differentiating learning. However, digital resources are primarily used for large group instruction by the teachers and are not incorporated into students' guided or independent learning experiences. Interactive boards are used as "blackboards" and are typically not used to expand student learning through virtual experiences. In addition, students do not work in small groups using these digital resources to engage in target learning tasks. Instead, students are passive participants of the learning and their work products do not demonstrate higher levels of understanding; thus, preventing the school from meeting its goal of increasing overall comprehension.

- o Students across the grades are intentionally placed in leveled cohorts, so that class groupings reflect similarities in academic abilities. While this approach to programming ensures that students are working alongside their peers, it is unclear how the school's goals relating to academic growth and student behavior are being supported by this structure. Students with high academic ability and little to no behavioral incidents are placed in one class, and those students with challenges, both academically and socially are grouped together. Teachers working with class groupings of students with higher academic performance cover more of the curriculum than those working with the more challenging student population. This has created inconsistency in academic and social-emotional expectations and limits teachers' abilities to provide all students with meaningful learning experiences, thus, hampering the school from meeting its instructional goals.
- Establish the practice of coherently gathering and analyzing meaningful data aligned to key standards in order to adjust instructional decisions and target the needs of all students. (2.2)
 - o Teachers use varied assessments and evaluation tools, including end-of-unit and teacher created tests, as well as the school's chosen periodic assessment, ACUITY, to determine what students know and can do. However, the periodic assessment option chosen by the school and the instructional programs implemented do not align. The interim assessments do not evaluate the effectiveness of the chosen curriculum and teaching practices. In addition, the analyses of results of the aforementioned assessments are not used to determine the effectiveness of curricular and instructional decisions. Therefore, teachers are unable to accurately determine students' strengths and weaknesses, at a granular level, so that they can adjust instructional practices in order to meet the academic needs of all learners.
- Create a safe and mutually respectful learning environment that addresses student's social and emotional needs in order to improve academic outcomes. (1.4)
 - o In response to concerns from parents, students, and staff, the administration has reinstated the use of "Ethan Allen Bucks" in an effort to reduce negative behavioral incidents across the school. However, they have not worked because there is a lack of understanding of this system by both teachers and students regarding its value and implementation. Furthermore, students articulated that "even though [students] do not show up to school, they pass and move on to the next grade." This has led to a lack of motivation, interest in learning, and focus on academic success, as evidenced by the school's high incident data. Parents and students referenced concerns regarding safety and respect. Thus, a lack of structures and processes impacts ensuring a positive staff and student interaction at various intervals throughout the day and levels within the school.
- Assure that feedback to teachers from observations captures pedagogic strengths and weaknesses and offers actionable instructional next steps to promote improvements in teaching and learning. 4.1
 - o The administration is in its initial stages of observing teachers using a research-based framework with staff in an effort to improve instruction. Some observations reference student work and focus on three of the Danielson competencies, Designing Coherent Instruction, Questioning and Discussion Techniques, and Engaging Students in Learning. However, feedback provided to teachers does not effectively capture the instructional practices observed as indicated by the language of the chosen competencies. Next steps noted

inconsistently offer recommendations to improve teaching practices. This limits teachers' ability to deeply understand the strengths and weaknesses of their instructional practices and make needed changes to address students' learning needs. Furthermore, identified trends and patterns from informal observations are not yet used by administration to determine professional development needs. As a result, teachers' ability to act upon the suggested next steps, is not suitably supported by targeted professional development, thus limiting the upgrading of instructional practices and improved learning outcomes.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Ethan Allen	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 as evidenced by meaningful student work products?	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, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?	X			
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?		X		
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students' progress toward school and class expectations?	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 staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?	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, guidance/advisement 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, with particular attention to the CCLS?	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
-----------	-----------------------	----------	-------------------	----------	-------------------	-----------	-----------------------