

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Kurt Hahn Expeditionary Learning School

18K569

**5200 Tilden Avenue
Brooklyn
NY**

Principal: Matt Brown

Dates of review: October 17-18, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Aimee Horowitz

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Kurt Hahn Expeditionary Learning School is a high school with 297 students from 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 89% Black, 9% Hispanic, 2% White, and 0% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 63% of the students enrolled and girls account for 37%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 84.9%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's respectful and inclusive environment supports students' academic and social-emotional growth resulting in higher levels of student empowerment and engagement. (1.4)
 - In response to the Learning Environment Survey and other informal survey data and incident report data, the principal has put steps in place to effectively increase safety and respect in the school. Students are engaged in conflict meditation, a Community Leadership Seminar enrichment class and a school created literacy-based support group called Inspiration Project, which all serve as places for students to learn strategies for addressing negative behaviors and promoting positive student empowerment through writing, listening and speaking. The school's specialized advisory program, Crew, and partnerships formed with external organizations, based on student and adult requests, ensure that all students interact with and are known by an adult focused on their academic and socio-emotional needs. Student and teacher beliefs about safety and respect, has increased by 26% and is formally shared at school and grade-wide community meetings, partially run by students. Consequently, the school environment is conducive to higher student outcomes, as evidenced by a decrease in incidents and an increase in credit accumulation and attendance.
- The school effectively utilizes data tools to identify student achievement trends to inform organizational, curriculum, and instructional decisions that yield increased outcomes for all students, including key subgroups. (2.3)
 - Data gathered from an online grading system organizes information based on the school-wide grading policy, Regents, and student Habits of Work data, diagnostic and interim assessment results are used to identify performance trends and assess mastery towards learning targets. This information is used to program special and general education students, most in need, for additional classes, such as Seminar, during the school day to target areas of weakness. In addition, diagnostic and interim assessment data are used by teachers to flexibly group students. Based on diagnostics, to meet students' needs, units of study and projects have been modified. Outcomes indicate that all students, including special education students, are beginning to accumulate more credits and are making steady progress toward meeting learning targets.
- Families are engaged in ongoing conversations regarding students' progress towards meeting expectations and supported in using tools, resulting in a shared commitment to higher levels of student achievement. (2.4)
 - Administration and staff regularly engage families and students in workshops and dialogue enabling them to track and understand student progress towards common core aligned learning targets, attendance expectations, the school's Habits of Work standards, completion of assignments via ARIS, and a real-time computer program. The school uses several different meeting structures, such as Parent Teacher Association, one-on-one training sessions, along with other school-based

workshops, to model various ways parents can access and use online information to have conversations with their children to address identified weaknesses and next steps. In addition, during student-led conferences, students' self-assess and present their CCLS summative projects to their families and peers. These result in a shared understanding between parents, students, and staff regarding each child's needs, progress towards graduation and common core aligned learning targets.

- Restructured staff and student time ensure collaboration amongst colleagues resulting in elevated teacher practice and increased student learning. (1.3)
 - The principal restructured the schedule creating collaborative planning time for grade, department and Crew teams. This includes scheduled time to meet and plan with the school-based instructional coach and team leaders as well as meeting with the instructional coach to assess observation data to appropriately target teachers' needs. At team meetings teachers analyze student work and share targeted strategies for effectively raise student achievement in expository writing. As a result of this consistent practice, data evidences increased use of higher order questioning and performance tasks, increased student engagement, and improved student performance in using evidence to support opinions both orally and on written tasks.
 - Special and general education teachers are intentionally paired to support teacher development, to collaborate to share and enhance their practices, and to support student progress. Students are programmed departmentally for daily targeted assistance or enrichment seminars based on Regents performance and diagnostic exams. Common planning time is built into all teachers' schedules, crew advisors support students' social-emotional development, and grade level crew team's plan collaboratively. These structures ensure teacher accountability for student growth resulting in achievement of school wide goals.
- Frequent and strategic observations anchored to a research-based framework provide teachers with clear expectations and next steps, resulting in improved practice and increase student learning. (4.1)
 - Administration conducts frequent, focused and strategic observations, using a research-based rubric, rooted in the analysis of student work of new and veteran teachers. Teachers report, "The rubric provides a common language around expectations and feedback", providing them with clear picture of their strengths and areas of growth. Surfaced areas of need, relating to the schools identified focus, are supported by collaborative teacher goal-setting and addressed through targeted professional development, including additional class visits and additional teacher team support. As a result, all teachers now incorporate non-fiction texts into their reading and writing lessons. Connectedly, academic tasks require students to cite evidence to substantiate their responses during classroom discussions and in writing.
- Structured professional collaborations and leadership opportunities ensure that a majority of teachers collaborate and are actively involved in making decisions that improve teacher practice and student outcomes. (4.2)

- All teachers participate in weekly grade team meetings to improve instruction which supports and leads to increases in student learning. Grade teams analyze student work to monitor student progress towards reaching interim benchmarks. For example, to assess progress made since the diagnostic exam, the 11th grade team analyzed students' non-fiction writing and their use of evidence to develop and counter an argument. They evaluated students' strengths and weaknesses and collaborated on strategies teachers can apply across the curriculum to target students' areas of weakness.
- Instructional team leaders meet regularly with the principal and coaches to develop and revise curricula, set school-wide goals, vertically scaffold content-area goals, and determine and link their inquiry team's focus to school goals. Team leaders are key partners in school decisions. For example, they modified the school curriculum and decided that seminar time be structured by subject area departments so that students' specific needs are targeted. As a result of the school's intentional and embedded structures to develop leaders, teachers actively partner with administration to make decisions and are empowered to support one another in effectively moving students to their next learning steps.

What the school needs to improve

- Strategically differentiate questions and explicitly model thinking so that all students, including English language learners and high performing, have supports and extensions that maximize student learning. (1.2)
 - Teachers engage students using a variety of high level questioning and active engagement strategies. However, questions and prompts are not strategically differentiated, such that all students, including English language learners and those performing at high levels, have a variety of ways to access materials and utilize extensions to ensure engagement in cognitively demanding tasks that maximizes.
 - In all classrooms students are engaged in common core aligned tasks and actively participated in discussion. However, in some classrooms explicit modeling for writing tasks, for those most in need, was not evident, thus limiting opportunities for all students, particularly those with special needs, to engage in writing activities that ensure high levels of thinking.
- Refine academic tasks to embed a targeted focus on vocabulary across subjects and grades so that all students, including those who are high and low performing, are cognitively challenged and able to demonstrate higher levels of thinking. (1.1)
 - The school's curricula engage students in rigorous common core aligned tasks which facilitates evidence-based discourse and extended responses. However, rigorous academic tasks focusing on vocabulary development are not yet embedded across the subject areas, thus preventing some students, particularly those who are the lowest achieving, from demonstrating their highest levels of thinking.

- Although teachers plan learning activities and performance tasks based on diagnostic assessment data and other student work, not all academic tasks include the scaffolds and enrichments needed to support and extend the learning of students who are most in need and high achieving. Therefore, this limits all students from consistently engaging in cognitively challenging tasks.
- Refine data analysis so all teachers supplement summative data with formative data in order to assess and address student learning status, track progress ensuring that all students are cognizant of their next learning step. (2.2)
 - While teachers consistently uses summative and formative data to analyze student performance, the school has not refined its data analysis practice, thus allowing individual teachers to adjust instructional decisions.
 - Increase self assessment opportunities during daily instruction to facilitate greater student awareness of next steps. Teachers regularly assess student understanding through questioning. However, limited use of varied assessments for understanding during instruction, including student self-assessment opportunities, reduces the number of students who are aware of their next steps. Therefore, all teachers and students do not yet consistently work in collaboration to reach students' next learning step.
- Strengthen coherency of communication of the school's high academic expectations for students so that partnerships with parents and guidance supports ensure that all students can achieve their next levels of success. (3.4)
 - While families are well aware of the school's high expectations for students, partnerships with parents do not yet result in a detailed understanding of how to prepare their children for their next level.
 - While all students articulate the school's high expectations around the school's five commitments to courage, compassion, respect, stewardship, and perseverance and the expectation that they will graduate and go to college; some students are not yet able to articulate specific graduation and credit requirements. Thus, not all students, including high needs subgroups, have a realistic picture of what is required to reach the next level or how to achieve them.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Kurt Kahn 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 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