

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Edgar Allan Poe
Elementary School 046

279 EAST 196 STREET
BRONX
NY 10458

Principal: Jennifer Alexander-Ade

Dates of Review: January 6 - 7, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Veronica Yurcik

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Edgar Allan Poe is an elementary school with 1,253 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 18% Black, 74% Hispanic, 1% White, 3% Asian students, and 4% other students. The student body includes 29% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 92.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal makes strategic decisions to establish practices that support student learning and build professional capacity, reinforcing school goals. (1.3)
 - o The principal, within her three-year tenure, recognized a school-wide need to analyze detailed student data and provide differentiated student support within the regular school day. She tactically schedules frequent common formative assessments in English language arts and math that has fostered better understanding of data driven instruction, has increased teacher collaboration on teaching and learning, and has established flexible student groupings that meet students' learning needs. The principal also hired a consultant to assist the school in improving the rigor of its bilingual classrooms and services to its English language learners. As a result, programming in bilingual classes now allows sustained units of study in each language to build language competence, and a school-wide focus on vocabulary development for English language learners is fostering changes in daily classroom instruction. School-wide, re-tooled word walls reflect more complex multiple meaning tier II vocabulary words across disciplines. Teachers report that their students are now more inquisitive about words and are using new vocabulary in their independent writing as a result. As one teacher stated, "We want kids to show more ownership of their words." Focused effort on instructional technology has resulted in seamless integration across all grades of Smart board visual and audio technology, laptops for research and remediation, and Elmo projectors to illuminate student work or teaching materials that support school goals for differentiated learning and scaffolded support. The school's decision to supplement the language arts curriculum with a supplemental reading program to improve foundational skills learning in early childhood grades resulted in students completing kindergarten with Developmental Assessment Reading (DRA) reading levels rather than as non-readers. In addition, teacher team learning is supporting development of common core standards-aligned units of study and the revision of curriculum maps to reflect increased emphasis on non-fiction study.
 - o The school's successful revision of its hiring practices includes a more rigorous evaluation process whereby candidates must exhibit competence in demonstration lessons with the student population they may teach, and provide evidence of their collaborative skills for future potential leadership roles. In addition, faced with a rising student register, growing class sizes, and limited physical space, the principal intentionally assigned additional teachers to English as a second language and first grade classes. She uses specialist teachers wherever possible across the school to push-in to classrooms effectively for reduction of student-teacher ratio, enabling frequent opportunities for small group strategy work and sustained engagement in content work. Furthermore, teacher collaborations raise expectations for both themselves and for their students.
- School supervisors and lead teachers give explicit feedback relative to school-wide foci during frequent rounds of observations, promoting reflective pedagogy. (4.1)
 - o The school conducts frequent student portfolio and assessment checks and schedules every teacher for ten monthly "snapshot" visits, each with a specific competency focus from Charlotte Danielson's 'Framework for Teaching' rubric. Written feedback for each visit cites specific low inference observations in relation to competency expectations and suggestions for improvement. The

- principal credits improvement in teachers' questioning skills and coherence of practice within grades to this sustained effort.
- o An instructional leadership team composed of supervisors, coaches, and lead teachers, meets weekly to create action plans based on on-going evaluation of instruction, practices, and curriculum. Consequently, coach interventional support, professional development, and walkthroughs are intentional and target identified needs that build teacher capacity. Additionally, goal setting with supervisors, submission and review of authentic student work, portfolios, and evaluation of summative data, now inform assignment, tenure and retention decisions.
 - A caring staff creates a very safe, supportive, and respectful learning environment that enables both student and adult learning. (1.4)
 - o In response to teacher concerns regarding safety, as expressed in the Learning Environment Survey, the school initiated a systems approach to responding and preventing school and classroom discipline problems known as PBIS, Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports System. As a result, both staff and students use new tools that have enabled the school to enact a process very successfully that encourages positive behaviors and interactions, and discourages negative behavior. Students across grades describe how they have learned about positive behaviors through PBIS rule boards, guidance counselors, their teachers, and through special assemblies, and have learned to be respectful of each others' cultures, and to treat others as they would like to be treated themselves in daily classroom interactions.
 - o An expanded guidance staff, instructional support and student intervention teams, as well as the support of a school dean provide a coordinated effort that impacts academic and social-emotional growth positively. As a result, there is a significant decrease in occurrences and suspensions noted. Another result is evidenced in the school's Progress Report in which extra credit was earned for English language learners and special education students for achieving a 75th growth percentile or higher in English.
 - Clear communication of expectations fosters collective responsibility across constituencies and a conscientious work ethic. (3.4)
 - o A weekly newsletter is one of the effective ways that the principal conveys clear expectations, acknowledges staff members' work, and provides resources to support implementation of school-wide foci. Teachers express appreciation for support and recognition, and offer newsletter contributions as well. In addition, on-going observation and reiteration of expectations has resulted in the school achieving great consistency in classroom learning environments, student management, and in conferencing and assessment checklist protocols.
 - o Parents note that the school makes expectations known clearly through frequent meetings, monthly newsletters that reiterate expectations, and through the parent coordinator, teacher, and supervisor outreach. As a result, they are articulate about school goals, expectations for attendance, behavior, and learning.
 - Strong emphasis on youth development helps students grow socially and emotionally, and assists families in supporting their children's development of study and work habits necessary for school and life achievement. (4.4)
 - o Teacher training and targeted on-going professional development and support enable staff to establish positive interactions with students while helping them

cope with tension. This has improved students' ability to self-reflect, evaluate, and communicate negative feelings in ways that resolve conflicts, build relationships, and maintain focus on their academic goals.

- o Related service personnel push-in to classes reducing student-teacher ratio, a dedicated counselor serves grade 4 and 5 to focus on middle school articulation, and a school dean assists teachers with student management and goal setting. A link with a local university provides four student guidance interns who work with counselors to provide additional individualized student support and after school clubs. In addition, a pro-active parent coordinator helps families access services, and a new parent resource room center is in the process of being constructed and outfitted through a grant and a college partnership. Consequently, students benefit from these support systems demonstrating self-confidence and the good work ethic necessary for post secondary success such as focused attention span during instruction, conscientiousness about completing all assigned class, and homework tasks and working cooperatively with peers.

What the school needs to improve

- Revise curriculum so that all students have consistent opportunities to cognitively engage in academic tasks requiring the use of higher orders thinking skills. (1.1)
 - o Although the school follows standards-based curricula closely and has recently revised school curriculum maps to reflect the demands of the new Common Core standards better, they have not yet emphasized rigorous higher order thinking skill tasks across the school sufficiently. The school uses the research-based standards-aligned Everyday Math program; however, in the math classes observed, students focused on single strategies, completing simple computations and skills out-of-context. Thus, students miss needed opportunities to demonstrate critical thinking to close the achievement gap.
 - o Close analysis of student work to inform refinement of lessons and student tasks is still a developing skill. While teachers are conscientious about using data to plan daily lessons and design varied assignments for student groups, daily work tasks are not always sufficiently challenging to ensure cognitive engagement of all learners.
- Reevaluate current beliefs and practices to ensure that differentiation is strategic so that all learners engage in meaningful work. (1.2)
 - o Teachers acknowledge that vocabulary and accountable talk are “big pushes” within the school and practices such as student “turn and talk” and content word walls are consistent across classrooms. However, this belief system has not been fully articulated in terms of specific pedagogy moves that support higher levels of student learning. As a result, while students have exposure to new vocabulary and have opportunities to speak, teachers still dominate lessons limiting opportunities for students, especially for the school’s large numbers of English language learners, to engage in substantive discussion that increases comprehension, critical thinking, and vocabulary building.
 - o Teachers incorporate technology, graphic organizers, and differentiated work tasks to engage a variety of learners. However, they rely primarily on assessment grouping levels rather than on-going assessment of student work to guide creation of new academic tasks. Thus, planning lacks the astute lens necessary to refine learning tasks to closely match student-learning needs so that all students are sufficiently challenged and achieve significant progress.

- Improve assessment analysis so that academic trends are more apparent for creating targeted instruction that meets specific needs of subgroups and individual learners to raise overall student performance. (2.2)
 - o Although teachers administer interim assessments and analyze results to inform student grouping and note inferencing and vocabulary as target areas, overall evaluation does not identify strengths and weaknesses across grades, subjects, or special populations. In addition, item analysis is a developing skill set. Hence, in-depth analysis of student assessment data is not yet an embedded practice thus limiting pedagogical adjustments for improving the school's academic performance outcomes.
 - o While the school has focused on the use of conferencing and checklists to monitor student growth, the rubrics that are used are not always specific enough to evaluate progress adequately, and to inform next steps necessary for improvement of student progress. The practice of students using rubrics to guide their work and self-evaluate is not consistent across the school.
- Expand use of periodic assessment results and feedback practices to ensure achievement of learning goals. (3.3)
 - o School leaders use periodic assessments and team evaluations of student interventions to track progress and assign targeted coach support to individual classroom teachers. However, assessed needs are not communicated sufficiently to staff to foster and support effective on-going school-wide adjustments needed to increase student performance.
 - o The school has many avenues for communication with families, and parents praise the school's outreach and responsiveness. However, although the school is currently developing a formal system to report results of mini-assessments to parents and include suggestions for intervention, feedback to parents on interim assessments is not yet sufficiently consistent and specific to fully support students in achieving higher academic outcomes.
- Amplify transparent measurement systems to assess progress toward interim benchmarks to ensure timely informed actions toward achievement of long-term goals. (5.3)
 - o Although school leaders have revised tracking systems this past year to increase frequency of check-ins and make data more public, systems are still insufficient to measure astutely whether or not students are on-track to meeting performance standards. The school's ability to identify and implement necessary interventions to ensure that students achieve grade level goals is thereby impaired.
 - o While teachers and teams employ several formative assessments to gauge academic growth, they are still developing systems that can provide them with accurate benchmarks to measure progress toward long-term goals and deeper understanding of causal factors influencing student progress. In several classrooms, assessment results followed on a tracking board indicate no improvement or a decline in scores that do not always accurately reflect progress as evidenced by on-going work products leading to achieved progress toward established goals.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Edgar Allan Poe	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
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