Quality Review Report

2012-2013

John Ericsson

Middle School 126

424 Leonard Street
Brooklyn
NY 11222

Principal: Marcos Bausch

Dates of review: January 7 - 8, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Alicja Winnicki

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

John Ericsson MS 126 is a Middle school with 319 students from sixth through eighth grade. The school population comprises 24% Black, 68% Hispanic, 3% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 20% English language learners and 27% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 91.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Educators make increasingly purposeful decisions to emphasize key Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) so that all students are able to experience CCLS aligned units of study to improve student outcomes. (1.1)

    - A review of curriculum artifacts reveals the alignment of units of study in English language arts (ELA) and math to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) is developing. The maps reflect the school's emphasis on key standards such as determining the meaning of words, reading complex texts and citing specific textual evidence in literacy, and ratios and proportions in math with an emphasis on fluency. Reading and writing standards are beginning to be included in social studies and science curricula. For example, the 8th grade science syllabus includes determining domain-specific vocabulary and writing informative and explanatory texts. Math teachers across grade levels use instructional units of study from the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) website as guidelines for their curriculum. Additionally, some math lesson plans include lists of mathematical terms and vocabulary. English language arts teachers develop their units of study, such as "The Dangers of Conformity" in grades 6 and 7, with evident alignment to citing textual evidence and supporting claims with logical reasoning as well as key vocabulary words. As a result, the majority of content area teachers have begun to design instructional units of study and include development of academic vocabulary, thus showing progress towards helping students become more proficient readers, writers, and problem solvers.

    - The school is in the process of embedding key skills and strategies for reading and writing informational text as evidenced by curriculum maps and teachers' individual lesson plans. Furthermore, drawing comparative conclusions, making and recording observations from experiments, citing textual evidence and making connections to real life are part of essential questions that guide learning. Daily academic tasks include open-ended questions for reasoning, investigation and application of prior knowledge. Moreover, a review of science and math lesson plans reveals planning for asking questions using the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels and verbs such as identify, show, or define. Therefore, all students, including special education students, are beginning to experience curriculum that meets the higher expectations of the CCLS.

- The school has established positive culture conducive to learning in a safe and inclusive environment that support a diversity of students working towards success. (1.4)

    - The principal sets high expectations for mutual respect, a changed and much improved tone and a safe school environment. Parents say they feel welcome in the school where everyone, including the office staff, knows them and their children by name and responds to their questions and concerns instantly. The school sends automated

alerts and reminders about school events. Additionally, families receive personal phone calls from teachers and school leaders informing them about their children's academic successes. Teachers and staff make themselves further available to talk to parents and to offer extra academic help to students after school. Many after school programs and activities, such as the basketball team and the dance program, were initiated this year with student input generated during assemblies and through ongoing conversations with assistant principals and other adults. Students feel safer this year in the hallways and in the cafeteria where they are accompanied by teachers and other adults. The principal, his administrative team and teachers collaboratively designed a plan to change the school tone. As a result, protocols for positive behavior are clearly communicated, thus students and teachers take ownership for improved school safety. Furthermore, the number of level 1-5 incidents and suspensions declined dramatically, from 163 last year to 6 so far this year, as indicated in a three-year report by the Office of Safety and Youth Development.

- A team of two guidance counselors, assistant principals, a dean and social workers meet regularly with the principal to address individual students' needs and set up appropriate academic and socio-emotional interventions. This team facilitates the Positive Behavior Interventions Strategies (PBIS) program to give students opportunities to learn and practice how to express themselves in a positive manner. At the same time, teachers receive professional development in strategies for managing student behavior effectively. In addition, students are supported by a team of counselors from Diplomas Now, a program implemented this year with the goal of providing extra academic and behavioral assistance to students. As a result, teachers' interventions are proactive, thus instruction is not disrupted and students are better motivated to come to school. Student attendance, coordinated by the aforementioned teams, increased so far this year, especially in the 8th grade, from 89% last year to 94% in the first three months.

- The principal makes organizational decisions around budget, partnerships, and hiring as well as scheduling teachers that supports collaboration and progress toward the school goal of increasing student achievement. (1.3)

  - The school utilizes the NYC District 14 Magnet School Assistance Program emphasizing the theme of environmental engineering. The funds are used for enrichment and technology programs during the school day and in after school, and money is scheduled for a new computer lab to be installed this year. Community based partnerships, such as the one with the Greenpoint Lions Club, offer the youth participation in the school and community based programs and initiatives. A partnership with Diplomas Now, provides the school with a group of young adult counselors who work daily in the classrooms facilitating academic and non-academic services to students in addition to generating data tracks for individual students, and providing mentoring and extensive tutoring as needed. Another initiative, Skedula, is an innovative technology program that helps teachers organize and input assessment results and grades.

Parents and students have open access to Skedula. These partnerships and initiatives are increasing learning opportunities and extensions to the core academic program for all diverse students to ensure meeting the goal of increasing student performance.

- Teachers are strategically assigned to purposefully match them with identified groups of students. This year, almost 50% of teachers are new hires and transfers in, many of them recruited as expert English language arts and math specialists. After reviewing teacher performance and identifying the greatest student needs, the principal changed grade level teacher assignments and programmed English as a second language (ESL) and special education teachers for push-in services. For example, ESL teachers are servicing students in general education and special education classes alongside grade level and content area colleagues, thus enabling additional small grouping in self-contained special education classes. Additionally, paraprofessionals are assigned to help individual students in classrooms. As a result, the student-teacher ratio this year is 9:1 and all students, including English language learners, special education students and other identified students enabling them to receive academic supports that address their needs.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve instructional practices across classrooms and subject areas so that diverse students are consistently provided with multiple entry points and opportunities to increase mastery of standards. (1.2)

  - Building on a developing school-wide belief around providing access to rigorous content through scaffolding and engaging students in discussion and questioning, teachers in most classes are beginning to group students and give them opportunities to discuss tasks. However, despite teachers' effort, most students work individually within groups and interaction patterns are mostly student to teacher and teacher to student. Similarly, scaffolding strategies were evident but not consistently embedded in lessons to ensure that English language learners or higher achieving students had opportunities to access or extend their learning. For example, most content area teachers use graphic organizers to help students plan their written and oral responses. However, adjustments to ensure access were insufficient to meet the learning needs and styles of all diverse students. Moreover, in some classes beginner English language learners were provided with minimal supports needed to fully participate in a lesson and access new information. Likewise, most teachers attempt to plan multiple tasks for flexible groups but higher achieving students were not consistently challenged or provided with learning extensions. As one student stated, "When I finish early, I re-read my work and let the teacher correct it." Consequently, inconsistent implementation of multiple entry points limits student participation in discussions and hinders higher levels of student thinking and success.

- Develop consistency in the use of checks for understanding and curricula aligned assessments for providing actionable feedback to accelerate learning and meet the needs of all students. (2.2)

    - The school is working on aligning their assessments to key standards and instructional units of study. Teachers across grades and subject areas use common assessments and develop 4 and 5 point rubrics to measure student work and give feedback categorized as “glow and grow”. However, teacher feedback is general and there are inconsistencies in providing students with strategies for next steps. As a result, there are missed opportunities to use the expectations and standards stated in the rubrics to maximize student progress toward meeting grade or unit goals. Teacher teams meet regularly to discuss data from periodic or unit post-assessments. Discussions are anchored around student results from common assessments and often include teachers’ observations of what students have learned or struggled with. Nevertheless, this information does not always lead to purposeful decisions about making timely instructional adjustments and including students in self-assessment. Similarly, teachers’ practices for checking for student understanding throughout lessons are inconsistent. For example, teachers ask, “Does everyone agree?” in one class, while in others students are asked to post thoughtful questions on the board to self-assess their learning. As a result of these inconsistencies, identification of needs of relevant subgroups, including English language learners, is minimized, thus limiting opportunities for targeted support to advance learning for all students.

- Build upon the teacher observation process to provide feedback fully aligned to the common teaching framework and design professional development to address teachers’ needs to support improvements in instructional practices. (4.1)

    - School leaders have developed and posted a calendar of three cycles of formal and partial period observations for all teachers. The school uses the Danielson’s Framework for Teaching and the feedback process is beginning to target planning and preparation, engaging students in questioning and discussion, as well as the use of assessment. The first cycle has been completed and most teachers were observed twice by one of the assistant principals who provided feedback regarding classroom environment and student engagement. However, a review of snapshot observations indicates that feedback to teachers is not fully aligned to the common framework chosen by the school and it inconsistently provides clear next steps and expectations that target the chosen focus competencies. For example, teachers receive comments and feedback outlining considerations and recommendations specific to lessons, such as including the Flow of the Day or implementation of the process chart. The school is developing a system to use observation data to design professional development through teacher self-assessment and professional goal setting. However, meetings with teachers and school leadership revealed there is a

need for increased professional support towards building a common understanding of the teaching framework across the school. Additionally, existing professional development opportunities mostly occur during teacher planning time and coaching support is primarily facilitated by other teachers and is teacher driven in the form of sharing and discussions of best practices. Consequently, the school's ability to improve teacher practice and student learning across classrooms is hindered.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: John Ericsson Middle School 126	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score		X		
Instructional Core				
To what extent does the school regularly…	UD	D	P	WD
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, including the arts, physical and health education, 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 that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to curricula, engaging and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?		X		
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels?		X		
School Culture				
To what extent does the school …	UD	D	P	WD
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X	
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?		X		
Systems for Improvement				
To what extent does the school …	UD	D	P	WD
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet students' learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			X	
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?		X		
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework 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		
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?		X		

Quality Review Scoring Key

UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed