

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Satellite East Middle School

Middle School K301

**344 Monroe Street
Brooklyn
NY 11216**

Principal: Kim McPherson

Dates of review: January 9-10, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Barbara Freeman

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Satellite East Middle School is a middle school with 207 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 86% Black, 1% Hispanic, 9% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 59% of the students enrolled and girls account for 41%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 80.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's inherent belief system on how students learn best is consistently reflected in teacher pedagogy that is aligned to the curricula to ensure that all students have access to challenging learning experiences.(1.2)
 - The school believes that all students should have access to a rigorous curriculum that enables them to demonstrate their learning capability and with proper supports and structures all students can be successful. Teachers have adapted their instructional practices in the areas of teacher planning, student engagement and questioning by using the Danielson teacher effectiveness research-based rubric. Curriculum maps and lesson plans reflect analytical questions that elevate student discussions. In a grade 8 English language arts class, teams of students were on a "secret mission" to find contextual evidence to support their opinions. After thoughtful group discussions, teams had to justify their opinions. These practices ensure that the school's belief system is aligned to curriculum and classroom practices.
 - Across classrooms, students work in collaborative groups and pairs on activities and tasks that are specific to their instructional levels. As tasks become more difficult teachers have included additional supports, such as increased student discussions, technology integration and increased time and opportunities for students to practice newly acquired skills. In a grade 7 English language arts class, students were required to read selected articles and identify the pros and cons of the argument. The teacher was selective in choice of articles ensuring that all students were engaged. Students were encouraged to use highlighters to provide visual representation of pros and cons. Students were able to discuss their opinions based on information in the text and post questions from the teacher. The activity culminates with the writing of a persuasive essay. This enables all students to have access to a cognitively demanding curriculum that requires them to demonstrate their thinking allowing them to produce work products that demonstrate conceptual understanding of content and process.
- The principal effectively allocates resources to support school goals leading to organizational decisions that result in improved student work. (1.3)
 - The principal maximizes the budget to ensure that teachers and students have the appropriate materials and resources in every classroom to meet academic school goals. To increase instructional time, allocations to support the Saturday "weekend warriors" tutorial program have been set aside. Spending to support professional development, for strategies to accelerate the learning of English language learners, is also budgeted. These additional strategies are embedded within curriculum maps strengthening the entry points for students to be challenged by the curricula. Professional materials that focus on data analysis and the integration of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) are used to support voluntary 'lunch and learn' discussions enabling staff to make accurate decisions concerning time, materials, and instructional adjustments to support student progress.

- Teacher schedules are organized to ensure that teachers meet two to three times per week to discuss student needs. The principal receives the agenda, minutes and next steps from team meetings in order to ensure that discussions improve student work products, the development of challenging tasks, and more effective instructional practices. For example, during the English language arts/social studies team meeting teachers were very interested in incorporating a strategy the social studies teacher was using that proved to be effective in producing more quality work as measured by the work produced by last year's students. Teachers thought it would be a way to provide more continuity between the subjects in order for students to make more connections between other content areas as well as more systematic approaches and strategies across classrooms. Co-teaching periods are included in several teacher schedules to accommodate academic intervention services. As a result of teacher team work and dedicated student time, teacher practice, academic task development, and student engagement in challenging tasks are evident across the school.
- The school uses classroom observations and the analysis of student work and data to provide effective feedback to teachers that informs instructional practices resulting in professional growth. (4.1)
 - In response to school's participation in the Teacher Effectiveness Program school leaders provide continuous feedback on teaching practices through frequent classroom observations. This is coupled with data from teacher surveys that indicate the types of support they request. The school focuses on all of the domains within the research-based rubric. However, they have highlighted the domains of planning and preparation and instruction as high leverage points to improve teacher practice and also mold student progress. Teachers receive six observations per year focusing on two to three goals. Feedback sessions take place after all observations providing school leaders and teachers the opportunity to discuss the lesson, student work samples and the teachers' reflections on lesson delivery. This has enabled the principal to provide feedback that is accurate and helpful in order for teachers to deepen their work around the goals set for them annually.
 - Through the work of the Danielson rubric, teachers have been provided feedback that moves them across a continuum of classroom effectiveness. The use of the Danielson rubric and the support of the talent coach within the Teacher Effectiveness Program enable the school to deepen their work with the rubric as well as identifying the classroom attributes that lead to effective practices. The coach meets weekly with the principal to discuss teacher progress coupled with the most recent classroom data and samples of student work on particular tasks. The coach also participates in classroom visits using low inference observations and provides the principal with tools such as the Five Steps to Effective Feedback Sheet in order to frame conversations for teacher feedback. This has resulted in teachers having a more comprehensive view of their areas of strengths and those that need to be further developed in order to meet or exceed rubric expectations.

- Teachers benefit from professional collaborations that build leadership capacity by providing them with opportunities to develop pedagogy together and make key curriculum decisions that improve student outcomes. (4.2)
 - All teachers are engaged in professional collaborations focused on school goals and citywide instructional expectations (CIE), such as, continued integration of the CCLS. For example, the English Language Arts planning team is focused on students' capacity to cite textual evidence to support their claim as they write argumentative essays. Additionally, for each unit of study teams analyze pre-assessment data to determine what students already know and need to master, and adjust lesson plans to reflect this information. Consequently, teachers are more knowledgeable about content and skills needed throughout units of study and more precise in adjusting their instructional practices resulting in improved student work.
 - Teachers have the opportunity within school structures to become school leaders in various capacities through participation in cabinet meetings, teacher team meetings, and assuming grade-leader responsibilities. In turn, staff has the opportunity to voice different perspectives across the school organization. During the English Language Arts/ Social Studies team meeting, teachers discussed what changes were needed in their practice to sustain class discussions in order for students to internalize more complex content material. This has resulted in adjustments to curricula, and organizational decisions enabling teachers to be empowered in the decision-making process at the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to strengthen the curricula aligned to key State standards so that all students including higher achievers are cognitively engaged in challenging tasks that promote career and college readiness. (1.1)
 - The school curricula are aligned to the CIE, CCLS and key State standards. In response to State exam performance, specific skills, such as citing textual evidence in essays and the quality of extended responses are emphasized throughout units of study. Curriculum maps and teacher lesson plans reflect modifications for students with disabilities and English language learners that emphasize student independence and self-regulation. However, provisions for students above proficiency levels are not reflected in the curriculum maps limiting the acceleration of their performance as well as access to rigorous curricula.
 - Teachers use formative and in- house test results to inform the planning and refining of academic tasks. A tracker is used to record student data regarding skills mastered throughout the marking period. Teachers re-evaluate curriculum goals and assignments based on the data in order to ensure that students are challenged by cognitively demanding, academic tasks in each unit of study. Students place post-it notes on their work with questions they would like to pose to the teacher. This strategy serves as an additional data set for teachers to refine tasks. However, analysis of

student work is limited, thus preventing a more individualized plan to support all learners especially high achieving students

- Strengthen alignment of teacher created assessments with analysis of student work to promote checks for understanding that inform instructional adjustments leading to increased mastery of concepts and skills. (2.2)
 - The school uses a mastery tracking sheet to determine student growth towards school goals. The school has determined that 80% determines mastery in all content area subjects in all grades. However, teachers' use of common assessments does not result in a true representation of how students, especially high achievers, are making progress. As a result, curricula and instructional adjustments that target high achievers are limited, thus diminishing higher performance levels for all students.
 - Across classrooms, teachers check for understanding using exit slips, student discussions, student conferences, and questioning. For example, time is set aside near the end of the class period for students to complete an "exit slip" which reflects questions based on the taught lesson or a self-assessment from students and their own understanding. The teacher uses the information from the sheets to make necessary adjustments to unit lessons. Additionally, teachers incorporate student performance tasks throughout the unit to determine which skills can be accelerated and those that might need additional time. Students self-assess their work as measured by rubrics and teacher comments. However, meaningful feedback to students using these tools is limited, thereby preventing all students from being aware of their next learning steps. As a result, not all student learning needs are met.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Satellite East Middle School	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score			X				
Instructional Core							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	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							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	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							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	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