

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**Ethan Allen**

**Elementary-Middle School 306**

**970 VERMONT  
BROKLYN  
NY 11207**

**Principal: Lawrence Burroughs**

**Dates of review: March 20-21, 2013  
Lead Reviewer: Joyce Stallings-Harte**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Ethan Allen is an elementary-middle school with 678 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 73% Black, 26% Hispanic, 1% White, and 0% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 88.0%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal and staff align curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards across content and engage students in tasks that integrate the Citywide Instructional Expectations to support increased learning. (1.1)
  - Based on a review of last year's Quality Review, the school leader assembled a curriculum team to focus on integrating the Common Core Learning Standards into units of study and implement the Citywide Instructional Shifts in reading and math. The principal led the staff, with the assistance of the Network, in writing curriculum that focuses on the school's identified key standards including close reading, citing textual evidence, and questioning and discussion. The school created curriculum maps across content areas that are uploaded on Rubicon Atlas, a digital tool that allows all teachers to access the maps, and encourages instructional coherence across grades and content. Maps incorporate benchmark, pre-and-post tests and performance task assessments based on the identified standards. Teachers make adjustments to the maps and instruction after reviewing student assessment. As a result, students have increased opportunities to engage with curriculum that is beginning to show the higher expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards.
  - In order to close the achievement gap for English language learners and students with disabilities, teachers are beginning to provide more rigorous assignments based on pre-and post-assessments and unit tests. In one class, students were observed in groups of four, working on challenging math tasks. Students responded to higher order math problems such as, "How does the location of the provided measurements (adjacent or vertical angles) impact the strategy applied to determine the measure of each angle?" All students had access to Frayer model sheets for vocabulary development, picture charts and math manipulatives. The teachers provided multiple entry points that addressed the needs of some students, allowing them to be fully engaged in the lesson. They produced exit slips that evidenced their level of understanding. As a result, student work products are beginning to show growth with increased scores on post assessments and teacher data binders and data from the predictive assessments indicate increases in student performance.
- Teachers design standards-based rubrics, create assessments, review grading policies and analyze data to adjust instruction to meet targeted student needs and improve their performance. (2.2)
  - Teacher teams design and use teacher created tasks with rubrics, benchmark assessments and pre- and post-assessments that are beginning to be aligned to key standards including close reading, citing

textual evidence, and questioning and discussion to determine mastery of learning targets. Performance information is shared with students. Faculty routinely reviews multiple forms of student data and uses this information to plan lessons and refine grade level teaching practices. School leaders structure time for weekly individual check-ins and review lesson plans and assessment data and offer feedback to teachers. During an English language arts teacher team meeting, teachers used a protocol to review student writing samples that focused on evaluating their use of evidence to support a claim. Teachers determined that additional small group instruction, based on specific needs, would be beneficial for some students. This process provides teachers with information on student performance based on the standards-aligned rubric and provides the opportunity to discuss implications for teaching and learning to increase student achievement.

- School leaders regularly offer professional development and conduct observation cycles to monitor teacher practice and promote professional growth to improve teacher competence. (4.1)
  - School leaders use the Danielson framework for teaching, a school developed mini observation tool and PD 360 videos, an online professional development program, with a focus on identified areas of concern including planning and preparation, designing coherent instruction, questioning and discussion and engaging students in learning to improve teacher effectiveness . A review of the data obtained indicates school leaders conduct frequent cycles and provide immediate feedback that includes instructional next steps, provides rating with recommendations for growth, and a professional learning experience through PD360. School leaders meet weekly with new teachers to engage in conversations around observed areas of need and plans for improvement. As a result of these discussions, teachers are more thoughtful in planning for student engagement which has resulted in an increase in student performance on pre-and post-assessments for students with new teachers. This monitoring system for the research-based, common teaching framework promotes professional growth to improve teacher practice.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Continue to develop teacher practice that enables all learners to access the curricula with consistency across classrooms in order to improve student achievement. (1.2)
  - Based on the most recent Quality Review, staff determined that students needed to be more engaged in class activities that call for higher order thinking and engage in discussion led by students with the teacher as facilitator, aligning to the school's view about how students learn best. Efforts to accomplish increased engagement through the use of Smart Boards and small group instruction are evident. Teachers are expected to conduct conferences and record what students are able to do and use

this information for planning. However, classroom observations yielded uneven levels of student engagement or opportunities for all students to have access to discussion. In an 8<sup>th</sup> grade science class some students were required to conduct a low level experiment with one variable and the other group was asked to compare two objects. One student commented that he had done that kind of work in 4<sup>th</sup> grade and therefore he wasn't doing the experiment because he was "too smart for it." Conversely, in a third grade classroom, students were grouped and asked to engage in the same task but with different leading questions. These inconsistencies in practice result in significant pedagogical differences across classrooms, thus limiting the production of work products that reflect high levels of engagement and thinking for all students.

- Strengthen the work of teacher teams to include inquiry to influence instructional strategies and increase student outcomes. (4.2)
  - Teacher teams meet weekly for a double period. They are beginning to use protocols to analyze student work products and refer to the school identified goal to focus on close reading, citing textual evidence, and questioning and discussion. Teachers use backward design to build the culminating task for each unit-of-study. Some teachers use a Looking at Student Work grid that notes what students do successfully, what student still needs to learn and identify implications for teacher planning and preparation. While teachers meet to review work and discuss next instructional steps, an inquiry approach is developing. Teachers evaluate student work sample and offer feedback to the presenting teacher, yet evidence on the success of strategies employed is not always discussed or monitored. For example, in one team meeting, teachers commented that while they may use a rubric to assess student performance, they do not always review and measure the effectiveness of the instructional strategy they decided to use. While teachers are still grappling with the use and administration of assessments, teachers are beginning to use pre-and-post assessments, benchmark assessments and performance task data to inform instruction. Thus, the uneven level of evaluation of the effectiveness of varied instructional strategies on student performance hinders the improvement of teacher practice and student performance.
  
- Continue to build a respectful school culture in order to support the academic and social-emotional development of students. (1.4)
  - In response to the most recent Learning Environment Survey where students, staff and parents indicated concerns related to character development, safety and respect, the school has implemented several initiatives. Monthly character traits such as respect, resilience and responsibility are introduced school wide and discussed through classroom lessons, daily announcements and posters. In order to give students the opportunity to voice their concerns, a student council has been formed where students are able to address their issues and find solutions to their problems. Hallway bulletin boards announce the academic achievements of students, positive conduct and attendance rates. Teachers receive professional development in classroom

management that contributes to a healthier classroom environment that is demonstrated in 75% of observations of classrooms demonstrating progress towards this goal. The Mobile Response Team, a New York City School-based mental health service program, visits once a week to provide counseling services to students identified through the Pupil Personnel Team. Some students feel that there is an adult that understands them well. While the school has implemented these initiatives and students comment that they feel most teachers care about their success, and that they have guidance personnel to talk to when needed, they state that some staff are “disrespectful in the way they talk to us,” a sentiment shared by parents as well. Additionally, while the number of occurrences in the middle school has shown a decrease as indicated in the Online Occurrence Reporting System, this data also shows an increase in incidences at the elementary school level. The supports put in place do not yet fully align with students’ academic and social/emotional learning needs, thus preventing a schoolwide culture of respect and trust.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

| School name: Ethan Allen  | UD                    | D        | P                 | WD       |                   |           |                       |
|---|-----------------------|----------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| <b>Overall QR Score</b>   |                       | X        |                   |          |                   |           |                       |
| <b>Instructional Core</b>   |                       |          |                   |          |                   |           |                       |
| <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        |                   |          |                   |           |                       |
| <b>School Culture</b>   |                       |          |                   |          |                   |           |                       |
| <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        |                   |          |                   |           |                       |
| <b>Systems for Improvement</b>  |                       |          |                   |          |                   |           |                       |
| <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 <b>inquiry approach</b> 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        |                   |          |                   |           |                       |
| <b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>   |                       |          |                   |          |                   |           |                       |
| <b>UD</b>   | <b>Underdeveloped</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>Developing</b> | <b>P</b> | <b>Proficient</b> | <b>WD</b> | <b>Well Developed</b> |