

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

P.S. 075 Emily Dickinson

Elementary

**735 WEST END AVENUE
MANHATTAN
NY,10025**

Principal: Robert O'Brien

Dates of review: Jan 7-8, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Ilene Altschul

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 075 Emily Dickinson is an Elementary school with 629 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 27% Black, 52% Hispanic, 16% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 94.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is Proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and faculty aligned curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and made strategic decisions to emphasize key standards in the units so that all students are cognitively engaged. (1.1)
 - School leaders and faculty began developing curriculum units last year using the Universal Backwards Design approach with essential questions and aligned them with the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). The teachers developed and are now using these English language arts (ELA) units that integrate science and social studies. For each unit and goal cycle they assess the students focusing on key standards through the benchmark, end of unit performance tasks and Reading 3D, software used to track the students' reading fluency and comprehension level. In grade four, cycle one the units focused on the following key standards: students will refer to details and examples in a text, draw inferences, determine main idea of the text and supporting key details, and write realistic fiction using dialogue and description. Fifty percent of the planned units in ELA are grounded in reading and writing informational text. The third grade was engaged in a research unit on Mexico and Brazil and the fifth grade was immersed in a unit on exploration and writing evidentiary arguments thus preparing students for the higher expectations for college and career readiness. As a result of the coherent planning across grades that addresses key standards, the school is making purposeful decisions to close the achievement gap. As a result, all students are being held to and are demonstrating meeting the higher standards necessary to become successful 21st century learners.
 - Teachers regularly review performance tasks to determine whether tasks were rigorous and appropriate for all students. One team of teachers was discussing the level of complexity with the math task and the scaffolds and supports that were provided for English language learners and students with disabilities. The teachers were reviewing students' work products and identified trends, gaps and implications for instruction. Another teacher team was analyzing the benchmark assessment for grade 5 and the rubric used to determine what skills need to be developed further for students to reach mastery in the final performance task. As a result, tasks are planned to cognitively engage all students and promote higher level thinking.
- School leaders make strategic use of resources that are aligned to the school's goals to ensure that teachers have structured time resulting in improved instruction and meaningful work products. (1.3)
 - With limited funding the administration utilizes vast resources to meet the needs of students. The school has a partnership with Regis High School to develop the "Boy's Read" club as an initiative to increase the reading achievement for an identified group of boys in grades 3 through 5 that is supervised by the community associate from Regis. The school created a dedicated space for the boys to feel ownership for this program. Volunteers from the Jewish Community Center work with students in an

“early bird” and afterschool literacy program. Through an affiliation with Teachers College, the school benefits from student teachers to work in the classes, reducing the adult to student ratio. This year after reviewing the class data, the administration decided to open an additional fourth grade class, reducing the number of students to 22 per class, assuring that students in this high stakes grade receive the support needed to succeed on the New York State English language arts and math exams. Administration strategically planned the school schedule to provide teachers with a minimum of two periods per week to meet with their grade and vertical teams. Teachers state that the increase of time has led to greater collaboration around curriculum planning and the development of academic tasks. Careful attention is paid to hiring of new teachers and teacher assignments. School hires teachers that have completed student teaching or worked as a substitute teacher and that have a common belief aligned with the vision of the school. In addition, teachers are placed in assignments based on their strengths and what is in the best interest of children and the school. For example an integrated co-teaching partnership was created where both teachers would benefit from the other’s strengths. As a result of these strategic initiatives and use of resources, the school is able to ensure meeting their instructional goals and increase learning opportunities for all students.

- The administration utilizes the research-based framework to consistently provide the teachers with effective feedback identifying strengths, challenges and clear expectations to further support their development and elevate school-wide practices. (4.1)
 - The school’s chosen research-based framework is supporting the development of teachers through frequent cycles of observation from the administration, peer mentoring, buddy teachers and provides clear targeted feedback. Teachers state that they are observed three to four times a month and receive immediate feedback, both verbally and written. Teachers receive a transcript of the lesson prior to the conference so that they can review and reflect on their practice. A new teacher reported that she meets with her immediate supervisor to review the observation and reflectively determine her next steps along the continuum. In addition, the teacher and her mentor reciprocally observe each other and discuss best practices. Another teacher received an extension of probation to ensure that further support provided raised his level of questioning. This improvement was identified in further written observation reports. Teachers set professional goals targeting the indicator aligned with framework connected to the areas they want to further develop. A professional development plan, developed by the administration, carefully identifies the topics, and intended audience that is targeted at ensuring meeting each of the school goals. Through one-on-one data meetings the administrators review each teacher’s professional goal as well as class data to determine areas for further development. As a result, teachers state that there are clear expectations, supports to meet them, and they are encouraged and empowered to further improve their practice.
- Teachers are engaged in professional collaborations building their capacity in decisions relating to curriculum development, the integration of the CCLS, and analyzing student work resulting in improved student learning. (4.2)

- Teachers collaborate vertically and horizontally to ensure consistency and coherence across grades as well as through the grades. Teachers collaboratively set their teams' mission at the beginning of the year and submit summaries of team meeting that reflect actionable items and next steps. The discussions and the focus of the teams is to develop common core aligned units and tasks and analyze student work products. Teachers state that they all take on leadership roles within the school either as grade leaders, team facilitators or present and turn-key information obtained by attending outside professional development through the network or with the AUSSIE consultant. Teachers state they have a voice in curricula decisions. For example, last year the team decided to eliminate a unit and was able to state their justifications for this decision to the administration for approval. The teachers feel that they are trusted to make decisions and the teacher teams provide them with forum to discuss and plan accordingly. As a result of ongoing collaboration and shared leadership, teachers' instructional capacity has increased resulting in an increase of students meeting the key standards in each of the goal cycles.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen teacher practice so that all students are engaged in high level questions and discussions and work products reflect deep understanding. (1.2)
 - The common belief that students learn best when they are aware of their thinking, their personal goals and take responsibility for their learning is consistently practiced throughout the school. All classes apply the WALT (What we are learning to) and the WILT (What I'm looking for) for every lesson focusing the students on the learning objective. Teachers are aware of and apply the expectations of the school's framework for teacher practice and the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) matrix; however the level of questioning across classrooms was inconsistent. In one class the students were engaged in three different discussions about three firebrands: one group of students who needed additional support were discussing whether Sam Adams was a firebrand; another group was discussing Thomas Paine and the meaning of Common Sense; the high level group was analyzing Patrick Henry's speech. In another class students were continuing their research of Mexico or Brazil and creating questions, but not all students were supported in developing their wonderings. Math lessons incorporated high level problems with real world applications but many students struggled with computation or with explaining their process. Teachers strategically grouped the students and provided small group lessons to support English language learners, students with disabilities and struggling students and broke down the problems to help students understand the process for problem solving. Teachers noted that some students need additional support and practice to reach mastery. Thus, the lack of clearly planned next steps and scaffolds to support learning did not consistently offer all students the opportunity to demonstrate their learning and exhibit their thinking through deep discussions and high quality work products.

- Refine the school's assessment practices so that teachers use ongoing checks for understanding and common assessments to adjust curricula and instructional decisions to meet all students' learning needs. (2.2)
 - The schools uses a variety of common assessments such as standards based checklists aligned with goal cycles, grade-wide on-demand tasks, Reading 3-D, Acuity and performance tasks to assess students and determine progress. The unit assessments and the rubric are created as a grade during teacher team meetings. The results of these assessments are analyzed to determine the next steps for students and subsequent lessons but only minor refinements are made to the curricula and unit plans. The students stated that they receive feedback and grades connected to a rubric that helps them improve. One student explained that she got a 2/3 on her Dream Act essay because she didn't thoroughly explain the quotes and her introduction and conclusion weren't strong enough. In addition, students are aware of their personal goals. However, most students could not articulate what happens once their goals are achieved. During lessons it was observed that students complete a "Do Now", turn and talk and use thumbs-up as a means of ongoing checks but teachers are limited in using this information to adjust instruction to assure that all students understand and can apply their learning. Thus, assessment practices limit teacher's ability to adjust the curriculum to ensure increased levels of mastery for all students.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name:	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