

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Edward R. Murrow

High School K525

**1600 Avenue L
Brooklyn
NY 11230**

Principal: Allen Barge

**Dates of review: February 26-28
Lead Reviewer: Leslie Miller Chislett**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Edward R. Murrow is a high school school with 4,021 students from 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 23% Black, 20% Hispanic, 29% White, and 27% Asian students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 42% of the students enrolled and girls account for 58%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 90.1%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's approach to culture-building and social-emotional support results in an inclusive environment that ensures students are well known, have voice in decision making thus adopting effective academic and personal behaviors. (1.4)
 - The theory of action that undergirds how students are served is expressed through the acronym *CARE*-challenge students, achieve academic excellence, respect differences and engage all students in the learning process. This theory is aligned to the school's goals and is manifest in the school's vision for students to be "college ready, career ready and life ready", and, as parents and students confirm, are evident in its routines, programs, and the faculty's deliberate actions to nurture its learners. According to students, Murrow is a place where you are treated like an adult and can express yourself through many opportunities such as Optional Time Activities (OPTA), course electives, competitions, performances or clubs. In addition, they are involved in decision-making related to school improvement through the student alliance or meetings with the coordinator of school activities where they weigh in on a school-wide issue or initiate a club or service project such as a faculty and student performance to raise money for cancer treatment. Parents feel assured their children are welcomed and safe and that safety extends beyond the school day. Parent and students describe the school's culture as inclusive where linguistically, racially and culturally diverse as well as physically challenged students enjoy an open and orderly, barrier-free environment. Parents see this as helping their children to develop independence, tolerance and compassion. They believe the school "tries to be all things to everyone and succeeds" and find it "astounding that the same school can take care of such different kids so well". Consequently, students are growing both academically and personally in behaviors that correlate with college and career readiness.
 - Systems are in place to ensure students are well-known and that their personal wellness is fostered. Driving these systems is what parents describe as the approachableness and active concern of the administration, parent coordinator and entire faculty accompanied by communication structures for faculty, guidance and mental health professionals to exchange information about students. For example, there is a student referral process for mental health support, monthly school-based support team meetings with social workers, guidance counselors and psychologists for case management; attendance team meetings, and the on-line system, for all constituencies to share pertinent student information about attendance, grades and/or behavioral needs. Services provided by community agencies are integrated in the school such counseling and youth development programs from the Jewish Board of Family and Children Services, Recognition and Prevention of mental health (RAP) coordinator and South Asian Youth Agency (SAYA). A new initiative called "Target 5!" involves teachers in identifying five struggling students and implementing action plans tailored to meet their academic and personal needs that, at times, involve connecting students to school resources such as tutoring, guidance or mental health staff. In addition, guidance counselors meet with students and monitor their academic progress towards graduation. Professional development, family outreach and student learning

experiences, on a range of topics including cyber bullying, accessing the on-line grading and parent communication system *Skedula-Pupil Path*, and college access, are pro-actively addressing student social-emotional growth and college readiness. One example of this is the intensive preparation for the college application process facilitated by the school's college counseling office beginning in the junior year. Another example is the work done to assist certain developmentally disabled students in acquiring the skills necessary to travel independently and to connect them to outside organizations for transition to post-secondary training or careers. Therefore, students are adopting effective academic and personal behaviors that lead toward graduation and college and career readiness as evidenced by declining chronic absenteeism, the school's most recent four-year graduation rate of 78% for all students, including an increase for students with disabilities, and its post-secondary enrollment rate of 76%.

- School leadership strategically aligns resources to sustain the school's distinctive vision regarding programs and college and career readiness goals and ensures teacher assignments and student program groupings advance achievement for all students. (1.3)
 - Decisions related to the allocation of financial resources including grants and fund-raising, upgrade of facilities, and to leverage technology and community partnerships support school improvement goals. At the same time, the school's longstanding commitment to talent development in the arts and sciences through screened programs, and an array of communication arts course offerings for the entire student body has been maintained. By connecting with a myriad of outside organizations such as the Brooklyn Philharmonic, Western Wind Vocal Ensemble, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Theater Development Fund, Broadway and Albee Dance Centers, the school makes it possible for all students to have exceptional opportunities in the fine arts, music and theater. Accordingly, the entire student body can choose introductory classes in vocal and instrumental music, visual arts, dance and theater, and over 7% of students take an advanced arts sequence and receive the Chancellor's arts endorsed diploma. The school continues to prioritize physical space to undergird science offerings that consist of required Regents courses, advanced electives and numerous Advanced Placement (AP) courses along with several programs for qualified science scholars. These spaces include a recently refurbished planetarium, greenhouse, marine biology and research laboratories. This investment yields numerous Intel competition entrants yearly, steady Regents and AP exam pass rates and furthers the schools' focus on college and career readiness.
 - Regular blocks of time for professional development were purposefully secured by the principal through a School-based Option vote and used to promote teacher's understanding of the Danielson competencies and engage them in aligning curricula in math to the Common Core (CC) standards and all disciplines to the CC literacy standards. Consequently, CC-aligned curriculum maps and units that guide instruction are elevating the level of rigor students experience in academic tasks. Effective teachers were strategically assigned to support students in a Global Humanities Academy comprised of ninth and tenth grade student cohorts. Here faculty hold themselves accountable for designing scaffolded interdisciplinary units and lessons in English language arts and social studies that have produced achievement gains for students with disabilities, English language learners

(ELLs) and students in the lowest third as measured by course and Global Regents pass rates.

- The principal has established a coherent vision for school improvement reflected in data-based goals that are tracked for progress and understood by the entire school community who is engaged in essential decision-making to advance school-wide goals. (3.1)
 - Under the principal's direction, the school uses "TLC" (Teaching, Learning, and Community) to communicate and track school-level goals and action plans aligned with the vision to prepare students to be "college ready, career ready, and life ready". This approach drives efforts to accelerate teacher development; student learning, progress towards graduation and social and emotional growth. For example, a needs assessment that incorporated data from monthly instructional reports submitted by supervising assistant principals in the 2012-13 school year revealed a need to enhance the quality and frequency of teachers' use of questioning and assessment strategies. A short term goal was established to target improvement in these areas as measured by classroom observations and ratings using the Danielson Framework for Teaching from semester one to semester two of 2014. Continuous monitoring of pedagogical practice informs school leaders' feedback to teachers, plans for regular department-based professional development and individualized support that is tailored to teacher needs in light of these priorities. The impact has been the emergence of questioning techniques that are increasing student discussion, and a broader repertoire of assessment strategies to engage learners. In addition monitoring of goals and action plans focused on improving the progress of student sub-groups has yielded increased communication about academic and personal progress occurring between teachers during grade-level conversations, and between faculty, guidance personnel and families as evidenced in increased usage of *Skedula-Pupil Path*.
 - Working together, the school's leaders and faculty share and involve students and their families extensively in decision-making for school improvement. For example, while refining the parameters surrounding students' Optimal Time Activities (OPTA), the principal held numerous meetings with the School Leadership Team (SLT) and the student alliance and other open forums were held with all constituents to generate possible solutions for how-to minimize crowding in the hallways while still preserving places where students could choose to gather. After testing various recommended options, a viable plan was adopted that preserved the privilege for eligible seniors to socialize in the lobby or utilize the wellness center. When interviewed, teachers, students and parents expressed that they feel they have a say in important decisions and are constantly looped into key issues through multiple means of communication. In part, this occurs through the principal's frequent use of surveys to understand faculty and parent opinions about proposed changes. The result is a school community that supports the school's vision and plans for advancing school-wide goals.
- School leaders and faculty align curricula to Common Core and content-area standards to build coherence across grades and subjects and provide a diversity of learners access to academic tasks that promote college and career readiness. (1.1)

- The school's accreditation committee oversees the refinement of course offerings in communication arts and other subjects to ensure alignment to the City's college and career readiness certification requirements for course content. In this way the school has created coherence across required courses, and credit-bearing electives such as Murrow Independent Learning Experiences (MILES) and reinforced an emphasis on rigor and non-fiction text in keeping with the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). In addition, in the last few years, teachers in every grade and subject area including physical education and the arts wrote maps for most courses and recently constructed unit maps to further align curricula to the CCLS and relevant state standards. The course maps identify essential questions derived from pertinent content standards, key concepts and skills, instructional activities or strategies, academic vocabulary and the types of assessments or sources of evidence of learning. Consistent instructional strategies to develop literacy skills in all content areas are built into some units and lesson plans such as use of the *MEAL* acronym to guide students to include in each paragraph the main idea, evidence from text, analysis and link to the lesson's objective or link to the next paragraph. Many units further detail learning activities, and culminate with a writing project such as a creative essay, research or lab report that is assessed by a task-specific rubric. Select teams now meet regularly to further refine curricula and integrate the CC instructional shifts. For example, during this review, the eleventh grade English language arts team met to craft sample prompts for student discussions and writing assignments that will incorporate arguable questions and emphasize use of evidence from complex texts, a requisite of the CC standards. In ninth and tenth grade math, State CC Algebra and geometry modules are being adopted that require students to reason abstractly and quantitatively and then explain their reasoning. This work has furthered the school's emphasis on giving all students access to rigorous curricula thus preparing them for college and career.

- Using baseline data from English language arts performance assessments, American or Global Regents-type exams as well as diagnostic tests from Achieve 3000, patterns of student deficits were identified. These encompass poor comprehension of texts such as primary source documents or interpretive literature, infrequent use of academic vocabulary and struggle with constructing and supporting arguments and counter-arguments with reasoned evidence from text. To ensure access to appropriately challenging, grade-level and Regents course-required reading and writing assignments aligned to the CC literacy standards, ninth and tenth grade teachers in the Global Humanities Academy along with teachers in Integrated Team Teaching (ICT) settings utilize a layered curriculum approach in social studies. Here units and lessons are designed to incorporate both non-optional and optional reading, writing and discussion exercises using primary source photos and documents cognitively demanding students to demonstrate knowledge of historical content first, and next choose from a menu of optional exercises that increase in complexity. Both types of tasks build to assist students in answering the unit's essential questions and culminating writing task. The impact of these efforts is evident in increased student motivation and demonstrated achievement as measured by the Global Regents average pass rate for the Academy's first two student cohorts, between 83% and 85%, exceeding the average pass rate of students outside the academy, and increased Global Regents pass rates of students with individual education plans over the last three years.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen the use of teaching strategies across classrooms to produce consistently high levels of engagement and thinking as demonstrated in student discussions and work. (1.2)
 - It was evident during this review that teachers believe in the importance of developing literacy in all content areas and in scaffolding instruction through group work so students can engage with challenging content. For example, in at least four of the classrooms observed, teachers explicitly prompted students to use “active reading strategies” including highlighting and annotating text to answer the essential question or determine the main idea. In several other classes, teachers guided students to decipher the meaning of vocabulary terms from context clues. In some classes, students were given different leveled texts related to the lesson’s topic or a choice of problems to solve. In Integrated Collaborative Teaching (ICT) classes, students worked jointly on a common task such as solving a problem, composing an article as a book summary or responding to the author’s position. However, while opportunities for discussion with partners or teammates were common during group work in at least half the classes, the task students engaged in was not always rigorous. When a large block of time was devoted to whole-class discussion, questioning often volleyed between student and teacher and a large portion of students were not called on to answer or did not contribute to the whole group discussion. Furthermore, those that responded were not often prompted to support their responses with reasoned evidence from text or the problem at hand. The most notable exceptions to this occurred in the math classrooms and Global Humanities Academy where students were pressed to explain their reasoning. While open-ended questioning strategies derived from the Depth of Knowledge and Danielson frameworks are emerging to foster engagement, currently higher-order thinking and active participation are inconsistently demonstrated across classrooms in student discussions. Consequently, learning is limited as evident in some students’ incomplete demonstration of understanding of the intended instructional aim in certain group or written tasks and the low-level response trends in some observed classes.
- Deepen professional collaboration so that the majority of teachers engage in the analysis of student work and data that informs refinement of teaching, incorporation of the instructional shifts and results in student progress toward goals. (4.2)
 - Structures are in place to promote professional development and leadership. Teachers are given opportunities to self-select topical sessions led by their peers aligned with the school goals such as Common Core Standards and technology integration or questioning and assessment strategies. Some teachers such as Integrated Co-Teaching or world language colleagues meet to analyze assessment data or student work to determine their progress towards goals for groups of students. However, currently this type of inquiry-based collaboration is still developing across the teams and has not yet resulted in improved teacher practice thus limiting the acceleration of student learning goals.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Edward R. Murrow	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 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards?			X				
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the 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 supports 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 those expectations?			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 student 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 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection?			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