



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

**Quality Review  
Office of School Quality  
Division of Academics, Performance, and Support  
2013-2014**

# **Quality Review Report 2013-2014**

**The Edgar Allan Poe Literacy Development School**

**X046**

**279 East 196 St.**

**Bronx**

**NY 10468**

**Principal: Jennifer Alexander - Ade**

**Dates of review: January 7 – 8, 2014**

**Lead Reviewer: Melodie Mashel**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Edgar Allan Poe Literacy Development School is an elementary school with students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 20% Black, 75% Hispanic, 1% White, 3% Asian and 1% other students. The student body includes 39% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 93.0%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- School leaders and teachers engage in meaningful curricular decisions that result in school wide coherence and promote students' higher order thinking. (1.1)
  - Faculty and school leaders engaged in a review of available Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) aligned curriculum materials and collectively chose to adopt an English language arts curriculum resource that offers a wide range of books for students to read and includes rigorous tasks for students. The school selected a math curriculum resource that provides teachers with a variety of problem solving tasks for students. School leaders and staff recognized that the English language arts resource curriculum lacked sufficiently challenging writing units. Consequently, teachers with the support of a consultant adjusted the units to include additional writing tasks. Further modifications to the units include the use of a variety of graphic organizers and visual material to support English language learners and special education students. Since the units did not incorporate time for students to engage in reading books at their "just right levels", teachers revised the units to include opportunities for students to read independently for extended periods of time. As a result of these curricular adjustments, the school's curriculum is closely aligned to the shifts and demands of the CCLS, and provides curricular coherence across all grades and subjects, thus positioning students on a college or career path.
  - Teachers embed challenging instructional tasks in all units of study. Across classrooms teachers pose tiered questions that promote higher levels of thinking for all students, and a review of modified units revealed questions designed both at the low and high range. For example, in a fifth grade class all students, including English language learners and special education students, were required to determine the theme from a story read and provides specific evidence from the text to support their thinking. One English language learner stated that he thought the theme was going to be sad because the author began the story by describing a rainy day and that the illustrations on the first few pages were dark. In addition, students were expected to "lift" lines and words from the texts that supported their thinking about the text's theme. Another unit of study explored why a character in a book needed to save money, requiring students to synthesize relevant details from the story. As a result, students consistently engage in rigorous tasks such as these that elevate their thinking to higher levels.
- Teacher teams effectively engage in structured collaborations to examine student work and make strategic decisions about curricula and instructional practices to support student learning. (4.2)
  - Teachers and coaches meet weekly to examine student work and analyze student assessment results, and they state they welcome the opportunity to work together. Formal protocols serve as the lens for analyzing student work. Teacher teams intentionally devoted several sessions to interpreting rubrics used in student performance tasks, clearly defining what each level

of student work should look like, thus developing a common understanding of expectations for the quality of student work. As observed in a teacher team meeting, teachers determine student strengths, needs, class trends and next steps for students and record their findings on a team-designed matrix. A review of the matrix captures student needs and teachers provide written action plans for student next steps for all students including English language learners and special education students. Teachers develop recommendations for one another's practice such as: additional small group instruction, peer modeling, teacher modeling, teacher inter-class visitation, scaffolding strategies and one to one student conferences. These suggestions add to the repertoire of strategies that improve student understanding and outcomes. Furthermore, an upper grade teacher team meeting used the same protocol to analyze student math problem solving and ascertained that students shared some common misconceptions. As a result, they adjusted curricula pacing calendars to meet the needs of students. For example, since there were numerous common errors on student assessments around the key standard of place value and decimals, teachers determined that in order to ensure student mastery, they needed to increase the length of time spent on the decimals unit. As a result of these practices the school's community embraces learning together, cultivating a professional team that is reflective about their practice and responsive to student needs.

- School leaders use data from cycles of observations and explicit feedback provided to teachers to inform professional development and improve teacher practice. (4.1)
  - Principal and assistant principal feedback from observation visits refers directly to Danielson's Framework competencies. The feedback accurately captures teacher strengths, areas for improvement and provides teachers with clear actionable next steps. For example, a review of the principal's written feedback to a teacher described the commendable features of a lesson and the precise course of action the teacher needed to take to improve the practice. The principal shared with the teacher that she needed to provide additional opportunities for the struggling students to understand the lesson by providing prompts, small group conferring or partnership discussions. As a result, the teacher designed sentence stems such as: "I think that...because..." to further spark student conversations. Similarly, the principal suggested the teacher also provide challenging learning experiences for students at mastery level by engaging them in small group discussions that encouraged them to compare and contrast articles and cite evidence from the texts to support their thinking. As a result of this targeted feedback, teachers gain a clear path to understanding their next steps that elevates their instructional practice and further supports student learning.
  - Information gathered from school leaders' classroom observations, teacher input and feedback from previous School Quality Reviews inform the school's professional development plan. For example, recommendations from former Quality Reviews and visits to classrooms informed school leaders that teachers needed support with designing practices that checked for student understanding. As a result, a workshop was provided to a group of teachers that addressed the various ways to check for student understanding including strategies such as: student conferences, hand signals and the use of misconception checks that intentionally give

students a misconception about a concept and students are required to disagree or agree and explain their thinking. In addition, teachers participate in ARIS learn sessions and work directly with the school's coaches, New York City Department of Education talent coaches and consultants to further support teacher development. School leaders build on teacher expertise by expanding the leadership possibilities for teachers and assigning key staff to assume instructional lead roles in math and literacy at each grade level, thus strengthening teacher capacity. As a result of these practices, students in fourth and fifth grade have demonstrated a 10% increase in English language arts assessments since the beginning of the year.

- The school's safe, respectful and nurturing tone fosters student social and emotional growth which cultivates an environment conducive to learning. (1.4)
  - Students overwhelmingly state they feel safe in the school and "totally" respected by their teachers. Parents share similar sentiments and tribute the remarkable change in part to the implementation of Positive Behavior Intervention Systems (PBIS). One parent shared that her child is new to the school and that the school is a great improvement from her child's previous school because her child does not feel threatened and the teachers immediately provided an orientation session to welcome her. Student suggestions are enthusiastically encouraged and embraced by school leaders and teachers. Students on the school's safety squad submit safety recommendations that are reviewed and implemented. For example, several members suggested that they needed additional members to monitor the staircases as students went to class in the morning, and school leaders honored the request. Students also communicate with student government members and make suggestions through their representatives. The school's focused theory of action addresses student personal and academic behaviors with dignity and genuine concern, thus students are confident they can achieve and excel in their roles as learners. As a result, of the school and structures to support positive student behaviors, the school has experienced a dramatic 50% decrease of incidents over the past two years.
  - School leaders state the school community's total commitment to Positive Behavior Intervention Systems (PBIS) contributes immensely to the sense of calm that is seen and heard in classrooms, corridors and other common areas of the school. The school's daily message over the public address system sets a reflective tone for students focusing each month on a particular character trait. Cooperation, responsibility, fairness are a few of the specific student behaviors described for students to display that would support their success at school and in life. An "Effort and Participation" rubric used by staff and students across all grades supports student academic and personal behaviors and ensures students clearly understand the descriptors of each indicated behavior. Students confidently share they can "go to anyone" to discuss personal or academic concerns. As an outgrowth of PBIS meetings and the close monitoring of student behaviors, the school's Social Emotional Intervention Team and Response to Intervention Team meet weekly to develop plans to address student academic and personal behaviors. In addition, the school's strong partnerships with New York Foundling Hospital, Visiting Nurse Services and other community based organizations provide ongoing advisement and support to families including home visits to assist families in need of

support. As a result of these structures, students are eager to come to school and the year to date attendance currently exceeds last year's overall attendance of 93.1%.

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

- Strengthen structures that engage students in deep discussions about their work in order to further extend student thinking. (1.2)
  - School leaders and teachers operate from the belief system that students learn best when they are able to explain their work to each other and engage in a variety of media that supports learning. Teachers use Smart Boards to complement their teaching and students work and read texts from laptops. In addition, students engage in “turn and talks” and work in partnerships. While teachers embed tiered questions into their written units of study as a strategy to support struggling students, opportunities that engage higher performing students in tasks that promote a productive struggle and accelerate their learning is not yet a common practice, thus preventing students from elevating their performance to standard levels and beyond.
  - Across classrooms students participate in turn and talk or partnership talk. School leaders’ professional development devotes sessions to elevating teacher questions that provoke student thinking and engage students in conversations about their work. However, with the exception of one class, across classrooms, observed lessons were teacher dominated with minimal contributions from students. In addition, teachers’ low level questions limited opportunities for students to engage in deep discussions that sparked an exchange of ideas and perspectives. This hindered the opportunity for students to engage in rigorous discourse and limited learning experiences that promote students’ higher order thinking.
- Strengthen the use of common assessments across grades that provide students with actionable feedback and support the use of student rubrics so students may self-assess and take greater ownership of their work. (2.2)
  - Teachers use a variety of assessments to monitor student progress including: end of unit tests, Developmental Reading Assessments, baseline and performance task assessments. These assessments help to determine student progress toward standards. Teachers provide students feedback that guides students to the next level, however, feedback that guides students toward mastery levels and beyond is limited thus hindering the opportunity for students to maximize their learning potential.
  - Across classrooms teachers use turn and talks, review conference notes and rubrics to check for student understanding of lessons taught. However, student use of rubrics to self-assess and own their own work is not systemically embedded across all grades. As a result, there are limited opportunities for students to be reflective about their work and for teachers to make adjustments that guide students to their next steps so students may increase performance to standard levels of mastery.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The Edgar Allan Poe Literacy Development School	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 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					
<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 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				
<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 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				
<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>