



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Ethan Allen

Elementary-Middle School K306

**970 Vermont Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11207**

Principal: LaWrence Burroughs

**Date of review: March 25, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Joyce Stallings-Harte**

The School Context

The Ethan Allen School is an elementary–middle school with 672 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 75% Black and 24% Hispanic students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 30% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 88%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
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	Additional Findings	Developing
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	Focus	Developing
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	Celebration	Proficient
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Additional Findings	Proficient
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Additional Findings	Developing

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use common assessments that measure skills aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and use a common grading policy aligned to the school's curricula.

Impact

The school provides actionable feedback to students and analyzes assessment results to adjust instruction and curricula to meet student learning needs. Common assessments provide a common lens and language to discuss student progress and inform instructional adjustments to advance student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers analyze pre- and post-assessments and use this information to guide student grouping and planning for instruction. For example, teachers use ReadyGen unit assessments aligned to Common Core Learning Standards in English language arts across grades to make adjustments to lessons and use the end of unit assessments to make adjustments to the following units. The writing pre-assessment indicated students needed additional instruction in providing text-based evidence for their inferences. Teachers reviewed the particular standard and revised the pacing of lessons and modified student grouping to target the specific areas of need. This approach targets areas that require intensive focus and advances student progress.
- After administering the pre- and post-assessments for GoMath, teachers use the technology component to offer students additional practice using online programs such as Mathletics to target specific math problem-solving skills. Students comment that this individualized program, "Helps them get better in areas that they know they are not so good". Teachers analyze computerized reports to enable them to monitor student progress and make adjustments. Results of this targeted programming indicate improvement in student math skills and progress toward skill mastery.
- Teachers use the results of the on-demand writing assessments in all grades, to target specific interventions and support. For example, after the on-demand writing assessment for informational writing, all teachers used an expository writing rubric that detailed the elements of mastery which students would use during their daily writing block. Teacher comments include, "Your body comments are well developed, details were relevant and you made inferences beyond the obvious-work on transitions to reduce repetition" and post assessment data indicate improvement for most students. This common grading provides coherency across classes and grades. Such focused, actionable feedback not only is evident across grades, it leads to improvement toward mastery of standards.
- Teachers use an Assessment Analysis Sheet and Instructional Plan template to analyze interim assessment results including an analysis of why students did not master the standard and then provide an instructional plan for teaching. For example, the grade 3 plan notes what standards teachers expect students to master and groups them based on the support they need most. The Data Analysis Action Plan Template includes a six-week instructional plan which is reviewed again at the end of the cycle. This detailed analysis of student learning advances student achievement and progress.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and beliefs about how children learn best, including use of questioning and discussion techniques to engage all learners in deeper thinking and challenging tasks.

Impact

Across classrooms student engagement in higher-order questioning and discourse and through multiple entry points to appropriately challenging tasks, aligned to the instructional shifts, for English language learners and students with disabilities is uneven and limits student progress.

Supporting Evidence

- Although the school's instructional focus is on strengthening questioning and discussion techniques to improve student's writing and speaking skills, this was not evident across classrooms visited. For example, in one fourth grade classroom, students were provided an opportunity to share their "boxes and bullet" ideas for their opinion papers with their writing buddy prior to beginning their writing task. However, in a kindergarten/first grade classroom, the teacher called on students, one-by-one, asking low-level questions, such as, "What do you call that?", "What is your topic?" to have them share their letter writing ideas with the whole group, without providing an opportunity for them to engage in partner or small group discussions about the ideas they presented to the whole class.
- Teaching practices that engage all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, is in development. While teachers work toward designing lessons aligned to the instructional shifts that include multiple entry points to support students' varied needs, this practice is inconsistent across classes. In a second grade math class, students were grouped into below level, on level and above level groups to solve computation problems with an assessment. During a kindergarten lesson, students worked with partners and used counters to represent numbers. They were instructed to make sure the partner was correct and asked to use the strategies they had learned. However when asked what they were working on students stated, "I'm adding numbers and flipping cards and saying numbers" without benefit of knowing whether or not they were adding correctly. Further, in a first grade class, the teaching point and writing objective caused student confusion when they listed things needed at the post office and then were asked to write a letter. The lack of scaffolded instruction for all learners limits progress for all students.
- Student engagement in learning activities that deepen thinking and learning is an area of focus and teachers are working to increase student participation. While teachers aim to increase student involvement, classroom observation yields limited opportunities for students to challenge each other's thinking and respond to questions. In an eighth grade math class, students represented proportional relationships between quantities solving multi-leveled realistic problems using organizers to support their work. Conversely, in a grade eighth grade English language arts class, while the teacher asked students the meaning of a sonnet, the teacher answered that question, and others she posed herself, limiting student discourse. All students were given a worksheet to complete limiting opportunities for learning extensions for some students. Learning activities such as these where teachers direct the discussion lead to student-to-teacher response and limited student engagement. As a result, teacher-centered and directed conversation is limiting higher-order engagement and accelerated progress for some students.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Developing
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

School leaders and faculty are in the process of aligning curricula to Common Core Learning Standards and content standards and ensuring academic tasks emphasize rigorous and higher-order skills for all learners.

Impact

The school is beginning to make decisions to build curricular coherence and working to ensure tasks are challenging, to prepare students for college and career and engage all learners across subjects and grades to elevate student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers work collaboratively on development and refinement of curriculum maps including alignment to Common Core Learning Standards and content standards. Review of maps indicate the English language arts maps are in process as the school transitions to the new writing units from Teacher's College.
- The school is in the process of developing curriculum maps using Rubicon Atlas, a web-based curriculum management tool, to develop coherency across grades in English language arts and mathematics. The school uses an agreed-upon scope and sequence guide and curriculum map templates that reflect multiple design elements including big ideas, essential questions, content, skills/strategies, key terms/vocabulary, assessments, learning activities, and resources. However, currently the maps lack focus of support for English language learners and students with disabilities.
- Curriculum maps vary widely in development and depth. Additionally, maps for content areas are in the beginning stages of alignment to Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. For example, science curriculum maps have plans that address only a few of the school's curriculum map elements while English language arts and mathematics provides more detailed notes on most elements. As a result, inconsistent curricula and tasks hinder the ability of all students to engage in challenging work across subjects and limits student progress.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

High expectations are consistently communicated to staff via the Danielson Framework for Teaching, through training, and ongoing communication. The school communicates to students and families about expectations and keeps them abreast of student progress toward college and career readiness.

Impact

The school maintains a system of accountability toward expectations amongst staff, and helps families understand student progress toward those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- During a meeting with staff, teachers shared that administrators provide professional development on site aligned to their pedagogical needs from the Danielson Framework for Teaching, and are also open to teachers seeking and participating in off-site professional learning to strengthen their practice. Teachers also expressed that they meet and visit each other's classrooms often, holding themselves to a higher standard based on what they observe happening in their colleagues' classrooms. Furthermore, teachers shared that they use the feedback from their colleagues during team meetings, from post-observation and weekly meetings with administrators to improve their practice. A review of teacher observations confirm that the cycle of observations and feedback support teachers' pedagogical needs as aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching.
- Teachers provide quarterly progress reports to students and families on English language arts skills, mathematics, science and social studies. The grade three progress report includes comments such as, "Compares the most important points and key details presented in two books on the same topic", and "Uses reading and writing to gather, interpret and use evidence in social studies content and concepts". This level of feedback helps families understand student progress and performance toward standards.
- High expectations are consistently communicated through school wide communication such as e-mails, faculty and departmental conferences, teacher team meetings, formal and informal observations and common planning meetings. Additionally, weekly principal notes to staff highlight professional learning in writing units-of-study, intervisitations to colleague's lab-site classrooms and instructional team meetings.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Developing
---------------------------	---	----------------	-------------------

Findings

Teachers engage in professional collaborations and examine data and have begun to use a student work protocol. Distributed leadership structures to build teacher capacity are in development.

Impact

While teacher team collaborations are connected to school wide goals, the use of an inquiry approach to measure progress for groups of students is inconsistent. Distributed leadership structures are beginning to build capacity and involve teachers in key decisions.

Supporting Evidence

- While select teachers were provided an opportunity to make key curricula decisions during the selection of literacy and math programs aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, most staff do not feel they have a voice in the decision-making process. For example, teachers expressed concern regarding school leaders' decision to no longer utilize a literacy program that they believed was supporting their students' diverse learning needs. Some staff shared that they believed it is important to communicate their ideas regarding the effectiveness of programs, before decisions are made by school leaders to adopt new programs.
- Teacher teams have started to use a specific protocol for looking at student work, to establish and plan agendas, to conduct reflections and to follow-up on feedback of effectiveness. For English language arts, teachers established a Gap Analysis Protocol that provides an analysis of achievement towards mastery for the skill of writing a research-based argument. Student work is evaluated using the argument writing checklist and instructional adjustments considered. While this is a developing structure, a consistent approach that monitors progress based on instructional adjustments is inconsistent and not an established practice.
- Teachers participate in school sponsored professional development and through opportunities provided through the network and outside consultants. Afterwards, teachers who participate in professional development outside the school are expected to turn-key to the rest of the staff. Classrooms are beginning to be set-up as lab-sites for intervisitation to build teacher capacity and encourage implementation of best practices.