



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Ronald Edmonds Learning Center

**Middle School 113
300 Adelphi Street
Brooklyn
NY 11205**

Principal: Khalek Kirkland

Dates of review: March 26 - 28, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Corinne Brown

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Ronald Edmonds Learning Center is a middle school with 910 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 81% Black, 15% Hispanic, 1.1% White, and 2.9% Asian students. The student body includes 1.6% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 44% of the students enrolled and girls account for 56%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 93.5%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 84.6% eligibility.

The school comprises three academies: the academy of performing arts (APA); the environmental summit and technology program (ESAT); the school of fine arts and design (FAD). Students pass an entrance test and demonstrate significant skills in the relevant area to gain admission. The school groups students heterogeneously in grade 6, then homogeneously in grades 7 and 8. There are ten classes that serve special education students across the school and a collaborative team-teaching class in each grade. Special education students in each academy rotate through different teachers in the same way as general education students. The school works to move students from the 12:1:1 classes (ratio of students to teacher to paraprofessional) to less restrictive environments. Students with conditions such as Down's syndrome receive instruction within two classes located in the performing arts academy.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school makes very good use of relevant data, including past performance and comparisons with similar schools, to understand student and school performance.
- The school successfully communicates its high expectations for achievement to parents, students and the community and celebrates student success well.
- There is a broad curriculum across the school and a good range of extra-curricular opportunities.
- The school makes good use of data to inform the carefully considered budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions.
- The school is making effective use of an increased range of guidance and support services for students' emotional, social and academic development.
- Students are committed to the school because they feel safe, respected and supported by adults who know them well.
- Student attendance is very good.
- Teachers are dedicated, enthusiastic and plan lessons that interest students.
- Parents appreciate the open access to the school's welcoming environment and the good quality information they receive.
- The principal and cabinet share a vision to improve outcomes for all students making effective use of data to inform decision-making.

What the school needs to improve

- Establish unified structures and systems for record keeping which support all teachers in the tracking and monitoring of goals.
- Ensure that all feedback and assessment of students' work clearly details how to improve so that students can set more specific, measurable goals.
- Explore opportunities for cross-curricular reinforcement to strengthen students' understanding and mastery of transferable skills.
- Develop differentiation further so that all lessons include varied tasks, including homework, and questioning that elicits higher order thinking skills.
- Sharpen goal setting at all levels to make interim, measurable checks explicit in order to monitor progress towards goals systematically.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made some progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Ronald Edmonds Learning Center is a community with high expectations for achievement that are explicit through the enrollment process and ongoing communications. One student commented, "Everyone constantly reminds you about academics." Students' commitment and attendance are very good, with many traveling some distance, as programs motivate them. They follow academic and specialist programs within their academy, so they have a sense of belonging to a school within a school. The school is proud of the number of students that take Regents' courses, but also aims to address the needs of all students. It makes very good use of relevant data, including past performance and comparison with similar schools to gain a clear understanding of student and school performance. There are several systems for record-keeping and tracking student progress across the school. However, the school has not yet established unified structures and systems to support all teachers in tracking and monitoring goals. Staff collaborate well within grades and content areas to monitor progress regularly. Grading follows clear rubrics but does not always indicate clearly how students can improve their skills so they can set their own goals.

The school encourages parents to support learning through frequent high quality communication and events. Careful budgeting, scheduling and staffing decisions support the academies' programs. Teachers work hard to prepare lessons, often incorporating technology that students enjoy. However, few lessons personalize learning sufficiently well for students. Staff are collegial and support each other through formal and informal opportunities for professional development. The school has not yet mapped cross-curricular links that reinforce student skills. It suitably promotes students' social, emotional and academic growth through guidance and linked support services. Whole school goals are clear and drive the work of the school. Interim measurable checkpoints are not explicit, although the school regularly checks progress. There are some new initiatives, which the school has not yet fully embedded, such as the teachers' resource center for professional development. There has been insufficient time for formal evaluation of its impact on student learning although feedback from teachers is positive.

The school has acted on the recommendations from the previous Quality Review, with some work still in progress. Use of data is used to inform differentiated instruction and to assess progress by subgroups. Effective work to support English language learners continues. Goal setting is more precise and linked to strategic planning. Curriculum maps and pacing calendars are clear but insufficiently detailed to scaffold learning effectively. The inquiry team's action research is in its early stages as they first met in January 2008. The members have surveyed their target group of students with low math achievement and have refined the team's focus to work on the extension of math vocabulary. The enthusiastic team establishes next steps and records notes from their meetings to share with staff.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school tests students on entry to complement information from grade 5 results. It uses its own periodic interim assessments competently across the curriculum, every four to six weeks, as well as information from standardized tests and ongoing teacher assessments to gain a clear picture of student progress. The administration maintains a very good comparative overview of performance and progress by grade, content area, class and student. Content teachers modify instruction the light of this regular monitoring if progress is not as expected. The number of special education students has increased significantly this year. The school disaggregates data to monitor their progress and individual education plan files are now centralized. More teachers work with these students than previously, so they collegially review individual education plan goals to enable them to have a common understanding. The school assesses some students through alternate assessment data folios. The number of English language learners has decreased this year, but the school monitors the larger English as a second language group. The specialist teacher uses suitable assessments and ensures that student needs are met, such as by providing first language dictionaries in math tests. The school interrogates data by gender and ethnicity group, notes anomalies and so establishes suitable interventions. There are separate monthly meetings for girls and boys by grade to explore common issues and friendly competition is encouraged between these groups to motivate achievement. The school also tracks performance by its higher and lower achievers very effectively. Cumulative data over 7 years in math shows a steady increase in numbers of students on Level 3 and Level 4.

The school compares itself well with similar schools in the peer group and network to improve its understanding of student and school performance. It has established its own United Federation of Teachers teacher center as an outcome of data comparison and visits to other schools. The library now has more books likely to interest boys in reading

The school trains staff in all aspects of data utilization. It recognizes that this work is ongoing so it can use data to set goals that are more refined. The principal maintains a regular comprehensive overview, particularly by class. There are several different methods of recording and gathering data within the school, with some teachers using technology for assessments. As a result, access at a single point and manipulation of data is not as efficient for all staff.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school leadership team have input into formulating and evaluating school goals, which inform strategic decision-making. These are clear and align with the principal's performance review goals. Cabinet meetings scrutinize data and note trends, and share them at faculty conferences. Weekly department meetings focus on content and class goals and instructional implications. The principal meets with individual teachers to set

goals for students. Although goals across the school are generally measurable, those set by students are not always specific, as written feedback from teachers is not formative and does not indicate ways to improve.

The school focuses on Regents courses in all three academies, with Saturday test preparation classes. This is especially effective in math. Students with low math or reading levels, and other groups of students who need additional academic support including special education students, receive suitable interventions following assessments. Different content teachers teach special education students and the school moves students to less restrictive environments as soon as indicated by data.

Students apply to the school because of its specialist programs and deserved reputation for high expectations. The school website and varied media throughout the school celebrate student success and reinforce these high expectations. Parents appreciate the daily open access to their child's class and school and the highly effective and extensive ways the school uses to keep them informed, including events, newsletters and frequent progress reports.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school uses the workshop model, with its own periodic assessments that provide suitable ongoing data about progress, as well as assignments set by teachers. Within each academy, students have good opportunities for enrichment through their "talent" specialist classes and through extra-curricular activities. Some students take extension Regents level courses in math, earth sciences or global history. The school effectively holds teachers accountable for student progress through comparison of data and classroom walkthroughs. They also monitor themselves through peer surveys of students to gauge engagement. Teachers are enthusiastic about their content area, and plan lessons with dedication that interest students. Differentiation within the heterogeneous grade 6 is by grouping, but in the homogeneous grade 7 and grade 8, some split classes provide smaller instructional groups. This pattern of split classes is showing promising results, but not sufficiently embedded to see a positive impact on student progress over time. Teachers broadly differentiate their lessons and groupings within classes change, depending on teacher, task and student ability. Few lessons, at any level, personalize learning to include varied tasks, including homework, and questioning that elicits higher order thinking skills.

The administration makes very effective and careful budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions based on students' needs. A paraprofessional prepares the science lab activities for classes, which maximizes teacher and student learning time. Considerable investment in technology, such as the Mac computer lab and several Smart boards across the school, motivates students and develops their skills. Students feel that the school respects them, supports them and provides a safe environment. This has resulted in a high level of commitment where, as one student said, "Teachers know kids on a personal level." Consequently, student attendance is very good, with effective systems in place to maintain this.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The principal ascertains teacher strengths through effective unannounced classroom observations with prompt feedback. Cabinet members travel with classes for a day to sample student experiences. Administration informs staff of the patterns they have noted so that teachers can modify their practice. The new teachers' center provides effective follow-up professional development. This approach is constructive and supports staff well but the school does not evaluate its impact on student progress. However, it does effectively base professional development on teacher, student and whole school, needs as indicated by data. New teachers receive effective support from colleagues, mentors and through bi-monthly meetings with the principal. Teachers are collegial, and share informally as well as in common planning and conference meetings. The meetings schedule and the current format of curriculum maps and plans do not easily facilitate opportunities for cross-curricular reinforcement of students' skills and understanding.

The school recognizes the impact of social and emotional issues on student learning. It has hired another guidance counselor and an additional dean, to provide better support for students' needs. The CARE (children are reason enough) team analyze data effectively and plan interventions that support student learning and their emotional and social growth. Proactive work by the new dean is showing positive results. Systems in place maintain an orderly environment. Partnerships, such as with Long Island University, satisfactorily support students' academic needs.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school leadership team and administration set realistic, measurable goals that are clear and directly related to student outcomes. Teachers' goals for classes align with these and the school monitors their progress regularly through its periodic assessment calendar. However, goals do not have formalized and quantifiable interim checkpoints so that progress towards those goals can be measured systematically.

Teachers use ongoing assessment data to modify their instruction and to highlight the areas of need, such as for academic intervention services or additional Regents' test preparation. The school's data analysis showed that classes in math were not achieving the projected results. Consequently, the school took appropriate action and purchased supplemental software to reinforce students' mastery of math skills.

The administration effectively bases strategic planning on data. This year, for example, it formed split groups from homogeneous classes to improve results. The school makes effective use of current experience to inform the annual planning for improvement. It intends that next year all students will have the same number of talent periods. The cabinet is working towards its long-term goal for 2010, which is to reach 85% proficiency among all students in math and English language arts. The school community shares the vision to motivate and inspire future leaders among all students.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| SCHOOL NAME: Ronald Edmonds Learning Center | Δ | ➤ | ✓ | + | ◇ |
| Quality Score | | | X | | |

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.

| To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . . | Δ | ➤ | ✓ | + | ◇ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level? | | | | X | |
| 1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students? | | | X | | |
| 1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners? | | | X | | |
| 1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school? | | | X | | |
| 1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas? | | | | X | |
| 1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools? | | | | X | |
| 1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students? | | | X | | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 1 | | | X | | |

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

| To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . . | Δ | ➤ | ✓ | + | ◇ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals? | | | X | | |
| 2.2 focus on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area? | | | X | | |
| 2.3 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement? | | | X | | |
| 2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students? | | | X | | |
| 2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers? | | | | X | |
| 2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve? | | | | X | |
| 2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children? | | | X | | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 2 | | | X | | |

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

| To what extent does the school . . . | Δ | ➤ | ✓ | + | ◇ |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students? | | | X | | |
| 3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day? | | | X | | |
| 3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment? | | | X | | |
| 3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge? | | | X | | |
| 3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students? | | | | X | |
| 3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development? | | | | X | |
| 3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance? | | | | X | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 3 | | | X | | |

| Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student. | | | | | |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| To what extent does the school . . . | Δ | ➤ | ✓ | + | ◇ |
| 4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction? | | | X | | |
| 4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers? | | | X | | |
| 4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment? | | | X | | |
| 4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school? | | | X | | |
| 4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals? | | | X | | |
| 4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning? | | | X | | |
| 4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students? | | | X | | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 4 | | | X | | |

| Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning. | | | | | |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| To what extent do . . . | Δ | ➤ | ✓ | + | ◇ |
| 5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments? | | | X | | |
| 5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments? | | | X | | |
| 5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas? | | | X | | |
| 5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals? | | | X | | |
| 5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes? | | | X | | |
| 5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning? | | | X | | |
| 5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change? | | | X | | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 5 | | | X | | |

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|---|--|
| ◇ | Outstanding |
| + | Well Developed |
| ✓ | Proficient |
| ➤ | Underdeveloped with Proficient Features |
| Δ | Underdeveloped |