

Quality Review Report

2008-2009

The Anna Silver School

Elementary School 020

**166 Essex Street
New York
NY 10002**

Principal: James Lee

Dates of review: April 28 – 29, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Daniella Phillips

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Anna Silver School is an elementary school with 595 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 9% Black, 65% Hispanic, 2% White, and 24% Asian students. The student body includes 30% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 93.6%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 93% eligibility.

Both principal and assistant principal are new to the school this year.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Students and families appreciate a sense of “belonging” at the Anna Silver School. Teachers, staff and school leaders know children well, and their thoughtful interactions with them reflect genuine concern for each student’s academic and personal development. The school engages students to good effect with a broad and relevant curriculum and an array of after school enrichment, recreation and intervention activities. Students are challenged by and interested in their learning, and they know where to go for extra help and support.

New school leaders work hard to effectively promote a culture of collaboration, inclusiveness and accountability. Administration listens and analyzes summative and periodic assessment data methodically. They note trends and concerns from student data for improvement planning. They listen to staff suggestions and encourage feedback throughout. As a result all members of the school community trust that decisions are collaborative and relevant. Similarly, structures for teacher collaboration, such as grade team, inquiry team, and articulation meetings, follow the same approach of using student achievement data usefully to guide planning. Teachers develop a clear understanding of students’ next steps, yet classroom instruction is not consistently differentiated across the school so does not always meet diverse learners’ needs.

The school identifies sensible priorities for improvement and implements effective systems to address areas of weakness. To improve students’ writing teachers practice elements of writer’s workshop and evaluate students’ writing with detailed rubrics. There are signs that good improvement in students’ writing is being made using such an approach.

To raise expectations for achievement of special education students, the school provides strategic professional development in the co-teaching approach. The school’s initiatives and actions are on point but some efforts in goal setting are still at an early stage. Although the school recently has updated curriculum maps, this work is not fully comprehensive, especially in science, social studies, and the arts, which makes it harder for teachers to set specific and measurable goals for students by using interim benchmarks. Teachers, students, and parents engage actively in the development of goals and action plans and ensures this school community is highly committed to maximizing student achievement.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The new principal is focusing the school community to address sensibly and urgently the need for improvement in writing by all students.
- Students benefit from a broad and engaging curriculum that highlights experiential learning through the arts and science.
- Teachers and school leaders have a good understanding of student data and its use for instructional planning and school improvement.
- The articulation meetings and development of user-friendly curriculum maps in some subjects are improving the consistency and depth of students' learning experiences.
- With supportive professional development, special education and general education co-teachers are increasingly effective in meeting students' diverse learning needs.
- There is a high degree of trust and collaboration among teachers and school administrators which establishes a positive learning environment.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend the newly formalized goal setting practices to all core subjects and identify clear targets and checkpoints so that teachers, parents, and students understand fully next steps towards higher achievement.
- Clarify and widen differentiated instruction so that each student's learning needs are understood and met.
- Formalize the development of teacher professional development plans to improve consistency and effectiveness of instructional practices.
- Develop further the tools, including a school-wide progress report, that help parents know what students are studying and how they are progressing.

Part 3: Main Findings

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

During this current year the school has developed a month-by-month calendar for reviewing student assessments and setting academic goals. Teachers and parents note that "it's making sense" how the new administration organizes the cycle of assessments which drives the setting of goals.

Most staff finds purpose in their actions around data collection and therefore appear strongly committed to integrating a broad range of student assessments into their instructional planning as well as monitoring student progress. In order to gain a good understanding of such progress, during the spring, teachers and school leaders analyzed social studies and science data from State assessments to formulate school-wide goals for the Comprehensive Educational Plan.

New this year are a series of on-demand writing assessments, math unit assessments, and running records which are effective in determining levels of literacy, including reading and math progress. Additionally, social studies and science cluster teachers assess students using four-point rubrics, and they communicate monthly with grade teams about students' progress. These new initiatives complement well the robust systems already in place for reviewing student achievement data from State exams, Acuity periodic assessments, and in-class student work. The school's sensible approach to student data collection has also been strategic in uncovering group trends.

The inquiry team focuses attention and resources on improving students' writing, as data suggests a lag in extended response scores from overall results on English language arts exam. Furthermore, boys underperform girls in writing, while Hispanic students fare less well in social studies than other ethnic groups. Preliminary results show that good improvement in students' writing is being made from this targeted approach.

While teachers and school leaders have a solid understanding of students' academic performance, the school does not provide parents with sufficient formal opportunities in order for them to track their child's progress accurately. The school relies heavily on quarterly report cards, publishing parties, and parent/teacher conferences twice a year for communicating students' achievement to parents. School leaders acknowledge the need for better two-way communication with parents about students' academic progress, challenges, and goals. To that end, efforts are well under way to develop a school-wide progress report and provide parent access to ARIS from outside the school as ways to engage and inform parents further.

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.

There is clarity and strong conviction behind the three school-wide goals for 2008 – 2009. Parents, teachers and students cite confidently the school’s current focus on improving students’ writing, the performance of English language learners, and communication. These goals appear at the top of the monthly parents’ newsletter publication, throughout the Comprehensive Educational Plan, and they surface regularly during staff and parents meetings. Similarly, students know well their individual reading, writing, and math goals and they receive personalized next steps in upper grade science. Specific learning goals are posted in charts, laminated to desk-tops, and added into journals, and students refer easily to these goals when talking about their learning. Teachers support students adequately in developing goals by providing menus of possibilities, by modeling strategic and precise goals, and by monitoring goals closely during classroom instruction through conferencing and work in centers.

The process of teachers setting class and grade-level goals with measurable outcomes is very recent, as it occurred for the first time through one-to-one meetings with school leaders in late February 2009. Goal-setting in social studies, science, and the arts lags behind literacy and math, as teachers have only recently updated curriculum maps in these subject areas and identified clear targets for higher achievement. The introduction of articulation meetings since December 2008 between cluster and grade-level teachers is a positive step in fostering collaboration around curriculum planning and discussion of student progress. However, it is too early to evaluate the consistency or effectiveness of class goal-setting practices across all subject areas.

Administrators and teachers communicate high expectations and students internalize the message. Student work displayed in classrooms and along hallways reflects breadth and quality of learning experiences. Attendance monitoring includes visible posting and celebration of monthly attendance rates. Students take responsibility for their own conduct through a successful peer mediation program and community service opportunities. Parents note that even after school fun events, such as the series of family movie nights, have a required literacy component of reading the books first, which strengthens the academic value of such social events.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

Students benefit from a broad curriculum and engaging curriculum with attention to all core subjects. There is strong emphasis on “learning by doing”, most notably in the arts and science, with experiential projects that elevate students’ interest like architecture building, field trips to historic New York City sites, and observing plant and animal life. Earlier in the current year, teachers worked together to revise each grade’s curriculum map to ensure both alignment to standards and clarity of skills and concepts taught. New and veteran teachers refer comfortably to these curriculum maps in their lesson

and unit planning, and the maps provide basic benchmarks that guide students' progression.

There is a range in the style of instructional delivery across classrooms, and the implementation of differentiation strategies varies considerably. Many lessons feature small group learning with students challenged at different levels. Good practices of student conferencing and use of learning centers exist consistently. Students participate frequently and with depth in these successful small group settings. However, many other lessons are mostly teacher-directed and aimed generally at the average student. Teachers do not alter assignments, texts or questions to a sufficient extent to match some students' needs. Several teachers have proposed adjusting the Reading First program in the early grade classes, so as to move away from an anthology-based text to more targeted reading materials. This suggestion reflects promisingly on an overall commitment by teachers to deepen and enhance the school's practice of differentiated instruction.

The new administrative team at the school takes practical and astute steps to build trust and transparency within the school community. An internal school "blog" effectively encourages teachers to consider and contribute to programmatic decisions, such as how best to structure the extended day program. Teacher collaboration now extends to cluster and support service teachers, as they participate productively in articulation meetings. Teachers, parents, and students describe school leaders as "open", "fair", and "inclusive" whom promote a very positive learning environment.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school's professional development offerings align well with school goals, particularly in the improvement of students' writing. Teachers engage in a critical self-study by observing colleagues during demonstration lessons called "lab sites". By reflecting on their own technique of conferencing, and by analyzing students' writing samples to spot trends, the quality of their instruction is improving. Recently the inquiry team shared lesson plans with staff to improve English language learners' usage of "juicy, strong verbs" in their writing. This concentrated focus on writing shows promise of being successful as students' performance on periodic writing assessments reveals growth since the early part of the current school year.

Teachers point with pride to grade team meetings, articulation meetings, and newly instituted "critical friends" group meetings as their most effective means for collaboration. They plan units, review assessment data, and discuss students' work together, with solid support from staff developers. The school lacks individual teacher professional development plans, but a first step at formal teacher goal-setting has begun the process of strengthening instructional consistency across the school. School leaders have developed recently an observation tool, so that instructional feedback is clear and detailed. Furthermore, all teachers have met with administration during the six weeks before this current review to set measurable professional goals an expectation that it is to lead to the development of individual teacher professional development plans to continue to strengthen instructional practices.

The school maximizes external partnerships to motivate students and prepare them for life-long learning. Over 150 community volunteers contribute their time inside classrooms as tutors or guest speakers. Certainly, these experiences broaden students'

exposure to different careers, but the sheer volume of short-term special visitors disrupts, at times, students' continuity of learning.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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.

In a school with some severe fractures of relationships in the recent past, it is impressive to see new school leaders, teachers, staff, parents and students working towards the same end. They share a common vision, purpose and commitment to sensible school priorities. Teachers have become increasingly adept at integrating student assessment information in their instructional planning. They understand how and why goal setting and monitoring produces school improvement. However, the school is still at an early stage of improvement planning, as teacher, class and grade goals are recent developments with differentiation within instruction and lesson planning lacking full implementation. Moreover, interim checkpoints in core areas of social studies, science, and the arts are just now being established, so that school staff may evaluate whether they are on track to achieve or need to revise school goals or the need to revise their goals.

Strong examples exist of effective action planning this year. The school began the year with several unexpected additions of special education classes and a wide range of student needs. Many current and new special education students had individualized education plans with generic or low-level goals. Tremendous efforts have been made to rewrite these students' individual plans, update them quarterly in detail to monitor progress, and support co-teachers in collaborative team teaching classes. So far, quantitative and qualitative performance data from special education students indicates good progress in their learning, especially in the collaborative teaching environments.

Parents, teachers and school leaders express a deep commitment to meeting the needs of diverse learners. The school's current actions, structures, and plans suggest there is a strong capacity throughout to support such values.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: The Anna Silver School	Δ	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?			X	
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?			X	
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?		X		
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?			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 student’s learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?		X		
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			X	
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?			X	
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYO, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.							
<i>To what extent do ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?			X				
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?		X					
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?			X				
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X			
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X				
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?		X					
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?			X				
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?			X				
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X				
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent do...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?			X				
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?		X					
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?			X				
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed