



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Duke Ellington School

Public School 004

**500 West 160th Street
New York
NY 10032**

Principal: Ms Delois White

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Reviewer: Barry King

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Duke Ellington is an elementary school for students from pre-kindergarten to grade 5. It has approximately 750 students, a number lower than three years ago but the enrolment is beginning to grow again. About 5% are special education students, divided fairly equally between self-contained and mainstream classes. Around 90% of students are from Hispanic backgrounds and 10% are Black. A very small number have other ethnic origins. Approximately 15% of the students are newly arrived from other countries. Approximately half of the students are English language learners, entering the school with Spanish as their home tongue. This proportion is much higher than in City schools, and a significant minority is at an early stage of learning English. Accelerating the acquisition of English by these students is the central challenge currently facing the school.

The level of attendance is usually in the 91% to 92% range, a little below the City average but close to the levels found in schools with a similar profile of students. Over 80% of students are eligible for Title 1 funding, which is higher than the City average.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school is steadily building the capacity for sustained improvement.
- The principal leads the school with determination, is well respected, and has created a staff who share her vision for the school.
- The staff work very hard and have a thorough understanding of the curriculum.
- The school has a well-developed approach to data collection and analysis as a way of identifying what needs to be improved.
- School leaders and staff have a clear focus on the major aspects of the school that need improving and have set clear, measurable overarching goals for moving forward.
- A strong sense of teamwork is in place and teachers feel well supported.
- The school has a program of professional development that is aligned to the school's priorities for improvement.
- The curriculum is well aligned to its mandated requirements and is adapted flexibly to the needs of students at risk.
- The principal and her administration team have a good understanding of the quality of instruction, based on extensive and well-recorded lesson observations.
- The exceptionally well-maintained school building provides a warm, welcoming environment in which students feel safe and enjoy their education.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that the steps taken to accelerate the progress of English language learners are successful.
- Make sure that all students are clearly aware of their goals, and the stepping stones to reaching them.
- Build on the increasingly strong culture of data collection and goal-setting by providing more professional development to support initiatives in recording data and using it to plan lessons.
- Strengthen students' writing and higher-order thinking skills so that they become more independent and engaged learners.
- Encourage more parents to work in close co-operation with the school.
- Make more extensive use of information technology to support both instruction and learning.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school with well-developed features.

The Duke Ellington School is improving after a period in which it performed worse than schools in similar contexts. New staff have been recruited who are in tune with the school's ambitions. The curriculum and teaching methods have been adapted to deal with the areas of weakest performance. The collection and use of data now makes a much greater contribution to the review of progress, the selection of goals and the action needed to reach them.

Behind these significant changes has been the calm, determined and clear-sighted leadership of the principal. She has united the staff in the common purpose of raising achievement, and has given them the professional freedom to be creative in their work. At the same time, she holds staff closely accountable for their effectiveness.

These factors have led to an improvement in the tone of the school and a rise in achievement. The school has recognized that it needs one more big push to bring all elements of its performance up to an acceptable level and it has rightly focused on the main area of remaining weakness, the rate of progress of English language learners. The restructuring of programs for these students is too recent to be sure that it has been successful, and that is the main reason why it is right at this stage to judge the school as proficient rather than well developed. It has, however, a strong capacity to make sustainable improvement.

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 student progress over time.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The collecting and analyzing of data has been central to the school's improvement and it now has a well-established culture of doing this. The importance of data is summed up in the remark made by the principal that: 'We have to be doctors. We have to have a diagnosis for each child.' Through the administration of a battery of tests and the ongoing assessment of teachers, the school builds a rounded and up-to-date picture for each student's performance that it uses to plan instruction and decide on whether intervention is necessary. Staff collaborate in building this integrated overview of each student, for example by ensuring that the progress of students noted in intervention classes is collated with the information from mainstream classes. Classroom teachers have worked hard to build data binders, containing a wide range of assessment information about each student. The quality and accessibility of these vary.

The school has a very clear idea of the achievement of each English language learner. Following recent test results that indicated that this large group of students was not making enough progress overall, the school has used data effectively to allocate these students to restructured programs to speed up their learning of English and to keep a close watch on their progress. The school does not systematically analyze data relating to the progress of

different ethnic groups but nonetheless has a good working knowledge of this that is both detailed and sensitive to the individual home contexts. The school also holds good data on the work and progress of special education students and of those whom they believe should have special education programs. Data on the students' performance in individual subjects is also important to the school and is well developed.

The school is alert to how well its performance compares with similar schools. A firm grasp of its recent performance is the basis of its overarching goal to improve performance year-on-year, especially by promoting the performance of the English language learners.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school is galvanized by the goal to accelerate the progress of the English language learners, as a way of improving their overall performance, especially in English language arts. This is the first priority in its Comprehensive Education Plan and the importance of this is well understood by staff. More generally, the Comprehensive Education Plan has precise and measurable goals that are collaboratively generated. They are realistic through being based upon the data about the school's recent performance. The priorities rightly include the development of writing skills and higher-order thinking skills.

School-wide goals are translated into goals for individual students. There is a general expectation that they should do as well as they can but the school also sets customized goals for individual students based on a finely-graded understanding of their current achievement. For example, those who are positioned close to the boundary between levels are targeted for support to move up a level. However, these goals for students are not communicated fully to them so that students do not have a clear idea of what they are or of the stepping stones they need for reaching them. As a result, they are not as informed as they might be about how they can support their own progress.

Close attention is given to setting goals for students who are most in need of improvement. This includes the many students learning English and those deemed at risk of falling behind where they are expected to be. Goals for individual special education students are particularly clear.

A climate of high expectations has become firmly established within the school for the behavior, personal development and academic performance of the students. The impact of this is seen in the calm and orderly tone of the school and in the improving progress of the students. The school provides good information to parents about the progress of their children. It does, however, have difficulty in agreeing goals with a minority of parents, and so has difficulty in working in partnership with them to improve their children's learning.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school's work is proficient with some well developed features.

The curriculum meets the mandated requirements very well. For example, the workshop model of instruction is well understood and implemented by teachers. Pacing calendars are used to ensure the delivery of the curriculum is on track. The schedule is very clear and staff are well attuned to it. The curriculum incorporates a diversity of projects to support learning, for example the accelerated reading program. A wide range of after-school and Saturday classes reinforce learning, usually in much smaller groups, and help meet the needs of students who are at risk of not performing well enough. Students respond well to these. The school has undertaken significant restructuring to promote the progress of English language learners, such as creating a number of bilingual classes, but it is too early to see whether these will secure the desired outcomes. The principal describes the school as an 'oasis' in its community. It is welcoming to parents and coaches them in ways that help the school to reach its goals. Staffing decisions are based on the perceived needs of the students, an example being the recent appointment of an English language coach to meet the needs of English language learners.

The students for the most part enjoy their learning programs, behave well and show positive attitudes towards their teachers and their education. They proudly talk about the homework that they do. The teachers relate well to the students, are trusted by them and are well grounded in the subjects they teach. They make their lessons interesting and purposeful, and they are developing their techniques to differentiate their instruction to meet the wide range of learning needs in their classes. As one said, 'in teaching, no one size fits all'. Lesson plans, however, vary considerably in the extent to which they have clear and specific learning objectives that can then be communicated to the students. Teachers work hard to ensure their classrooms are stimulating places and their reading resources are well organized. As yet, they make relatively limited use of computer technology, partly because the school's budget, though soundly deployed, has not allowed the acquisition of the equipment and training for its use.

Good attendance is regarded as important by the school and it has a sound range of strategies to promote it, including rewards for good attendees and home contact for those who are absent.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is proficient with well developed features,

The school has steadily built the capacity to improve its performance. At the heart of this is the determination and clear vision of the principal, whose personal commitment and leadership skills are widely respected. She has built around her, partly through a rigorous hiring process, an administration and staff who share her goals and work collaboratively with one another to achieve them. Staff value the sense of teamwork and common purpose, and feel well supported. They are clear about the importance of data as a basis for analyzing performance and are increasingly effective in using it.

The principal and her leadership team have, through their accurate and well-recorded observations of lessons, a sure grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching, and where support is needed. This knowledge helps in planning the program of professional development, which is geared to the school's improvement strategies and mandated obligations.

Staff are reflective about what they do and approach their duties with a high degree of professional commitment. They have willingly embraced many changes. As yet, however, insufficient time has been given to review how well certain initiatives, such as the creation of data binders, are working. Staff themselves are aware of the need for further professional support in such areas as data management and supporting English language learners.

The school works smoothly on a day-to-day basis and is orderly. The school building is exceptionally well maintained and provides an excellent environment in which learning can take place, something that is greatly appreciated by the students who feel safe and happy there. Parents also comment very favorably on the welcoming nature of the school. A reasonable range of links have been established with external organizations to support the work of the school. It has, however, encountered some barriers in getting parents to support its intentions, for example in moving students to special education provision, which has had the effect of holding back the progress of certain students.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school has developed a culture of self-review that is now well established in much of what it does. To underpin this, it has a range of well-judged, measurable goals to serve as benchmarks for its performance. Staff monitor the progress of students towards their individual goals effectively. The school keeps a close watch on progress towards the overarching goals that it knows it must achieve. Where a student's progress falters, intervention is triggered, with new goals set to bring that student back on course. Where, on the other hand, a student is doing well, goals are set to stretch the student further. The Comprehensive Education Plan is a living document, with ongoing reviews of how well its goals are being met. Where they are not, new goals and policies are introduced. An example of the school's response to a problem has been the restructuring that has taken place to boost the achievement of the English language learners.

The school has introduced significant changes in many areas, for example in the way it instructs students without fluency in English and how it collects, organizes and uses data. It has had to prioritize certain actions and so it is understandable that it has not been possible to review the progress of all initiatives simultaneously to see that they connect with each other. For example, the school's leadership does not have secure evidence on the extent to which the data collected in each class is used to inform lesson plans. It is also too soon to be sure whether the initiatives associated with English language learners have been successful enough in reaching the goals set for them. In summary, the school has been stronger at implementing policies to address acknowledged weaknesses than it has been in monitoring the effectiveness of these initiatives.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Duke Ellington School (PS 004)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score		X	

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 student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> each student, classroom, grade level, 			X
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 			X
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> all other categories of interest to the school* 			X
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.			X
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and 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 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.		X	
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
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3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.			X
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.		X	
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.			∅ ✓ +
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.			X
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.		X	
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.			∅ ✓ +
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.			X
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.			X
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.		X	
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X