



# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Elmhurst School**

**Public School 089Q**

**85 - 28 Britton Avenue  
Queens  
NY 11373**

**Principal: Casper A. Cacioppo**

**Dates of review: May 22 - 23, 2007**

**Reviewer: Denis Pittman**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Public School 89, the Elmhurst School, has a population of 1649 students, from pre-kindergarten to Grade 5. It serves an ethnically diverse population in a community of changing population which is reflected in the high mobility of the student roll. The ethnic composition of the school is 73% Hispanic students, 21% Asian, 5% White and 1% Black or others. A high proportion of students (52%) are English Language Learners. Approximately 9% of students have individualized education plans and receive the full continuum of services appropriate to special educational need. The school is in receipt of Title I funding (81%). Attendance levels at 94%, are above that of similar and city schools.

The school is organizationally arranged as four Academies. These are essentially smaller learning communities, containing the spectrum of grades, which provide better opportunities for each student to be known individually.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal has established a clear vision for the school, leads by example and is well respected by students, parents and staff.
- The school very efficiently collects data to monitor and provide for the specific needs of its students.
- The organization and leadership of the respective Academies is effective and provides a 'family' context for students to learn and develop.
- Relationships between students and staff are very good which reflects in the care and support students receive.
- The curriculum is challenging and innovative and is effectively aligned to the needs of students.
- Students enjoy coming to school which is shown in high attendance levels.
- A strong collaborative team ethos has been successfully developed which supports the commitment to improved instructional practice.
- The school runs smoothly on a daily basis with clear and effective procedures to provide a safe environment for students.
- Staffing and budgetary decisions reflect the learning needs of students.
- The school provides an effective 'dual language' program to promote the language competence of students.

### What the school needs to improve

- Develop suitable programs, organisation and staff training for teachers to raise the quality of differentiated instruction across the school.
- Improve the achievement of special education students in mathematics and English language and Arts.
- Continue to explore management strategies for monitoring and evaluating the specific challenges of the respective Academies.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a well-developed school.**

The school has been very successful in promoting a significant trend of improvement in relation to its test scores. A safe and orderly environment has been created which effectively encourages students' learning and achievement. Day to day administration is very efficient. Students really enjoy coming to school and feel they are valued and their opinions respected. The school has created a positive relationship with its parent group and outside agencies which work well together for the benefit of students. The school has been particularly innovative in creating successful programs to support the learning of the high number of English language learners. The school is making very effective use of the data it collects to make strategic decisions about students' progress within classrooms and at grade levels. Lesson activities are increasingly attuned to the differing levels of student need. Teachers are very supportive of students and committed to making their lessons interesting and enjoyable. The high expectations of students' academic progress are reflected in the challenge seen in lessons. The principal has successfully promoted change and development within the school. The noticeable improvements are greatly valued by the parents and local community. He ably utilizes this goodwill to promote the work of the school. The school has the capacity to build even further on its current achievements.

### 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 school uses a substantive range of standard tests and formal assessments which are compiled to provide data on the academic and personal development of all students. Standardized test results are studied and analyzed to identify trends and potential areas for improvement. The school data has shown a significant improving trend in relation to these test scores. It has identified a literacy skill of editing as a focus for improvement, particularly in the English language learner program. The school also generates a significant amount of diagnostic data which is based upon standardized programs, for example, Periodic Reading Assessment (Rigby).

The formative assessment of students compiled by teachers is very detailed and comprehensive. Each teacher has assessment information on the basic skills of individual students which constitute a 'running record' of achievement. The school has established a coherence and consistency to its assessment data by requiring teachers to produce a portfolio of work each student. The school has a good awareness of trends in the data of groups of children related to ethnicity and those students who are English language learners. The latter group represents a high proportion of the student population; the analysis of their needs is detailed and provides comprehensive evidence for teachers. This information is used well to schedule the instructional needs for these students. In the context of students with special educational need there is insufficient sharing of information about their individual education plans. This is necessary in order to raise the overall

performance of the students in relation to mathematics and English language and arts. Overall the analysis of school data is robust and rigorous. The comparison of performance with similar schools is systematic and informs goal setting. Data in relation to past performance is analyzed well to identify trends of improvement and re-enforce good practice. The compilation of the student portfolio is enabling the progress of students to be evaluated effectively by a year on year basis.

**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 identification of the school's goals, detailed in the Comprehensive Educational Plan, is a structured and carefully orchestrated collaborative activity. These goals are continually referred to and returned to during Academy meetings and discussions which reflect improvements to the curriculum and the quality of teaching. A particular focus has been on the drive to develop oral competency for English language learners. The school is particularly effective in responding to the outcomes of standardized test data. For example, in a recent examination, the school identified under-achievement in science. In response to this finding, curriculum units were redesigned to provide a more secure base for students learning. Students say that they enjoy this change in instructional activities.

Data is used well to identify the specific needs of individual students. The school continually explores ways of improving this analysis to make it more focused and specific. For example, in the English language learner’s program an early assessment is made of students basic language competences. A matrix of students and their levels of their competence highlight the specific instructional requirements for individual students. These effective processes provide a context for the monitoring of students’ progress. This evidence is effectively collated in a portfolio of achievement where the specific needs of students are identified.

The principal has very high expectations for school improvement which are clearly communicated to all. This message is communicated during productive Academy orientation sessions with students, parents and staff. The expectations of staff are clearly conveyed through a detailed school report and the regular formal meetings which take place. Parents are encouraged to take an active part in their child's education through an innovative ‘First Steps’ program which promotes language development in young children. There is a clear commitment from the school community, within all its constituents, to the goals and objectives of the school.

**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 well developed.**

The school effectively reviews the curriculum to ensure that it is closely aligned to mandated requirements. For example, the school updated the Science program following data analysis which indicated that students were making poor progress in this subject. It is

currently in the process of modifying and improving even further its procedures for monitoring students' progress in mathematics

There are strong systems to ensure that teachers plan effectively to meet the needs of their students. The Principal sets clear expectations of instructional practice which are understood by all teachers. These become part of the foci of monitoring exercises throughout the year. Teachers plan well together in grade groups to ensure consistency. They regularly review students' progress data and in conjunction with other school personnel, use this information to determine appropriate intervention strategies to support those who fail to make the expected grade level.

The school uses the data to make effective decisions about budgeting, staffing and scheduling. For example, additional science specialist teachers have been hired. This has enabled the school to increase the number of science periods taught by specialist teachers. School data indicates that students, who currently have access to the dual language program, make good progress. Consequently, due to the success of this program, it has been expanded so that more students can have access.

Students are well-motivated because they are clear about the purpose of lessons and what is expected of them. Teachers are careful to ensure that students understand how each lesson builds on what they have learnt before. They provide good illustrative examples of the learning which is required. This gives students the confidence to, 'have a go' following the teacher's example. Students and staff enjoy very positive relationships based on mutual trust and respect.

Attendance is very good. This reflects the high expectations that the school has as well as parents' commitment and support of the school's work in this area. The school strongly promotes punctuality. The caring and nurturing environment provided makes the school "a place in which students want to be".

**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 well developed.**

The school carefully selects staff using specific criteria, mainly related to teachers having high expectations of students, an awareness of issues related to English language learners and a commitment to professional learning. The school is successful in building this staff profile and appointing staff who share the school's values and to confident in handling data.

Professional Development programs have evolved around the training and learning requirements associated with the curriculum programs provided at the school. These have been successful in raising the confidence and competence of the staff. The principal recognizes the importance of professional development to promote language skills in a variety of contexts and is creative in the use of resources and time to ensure that an adequate provision is made for this purpose. The effective use of data to promote differentiated instruction is an area for ongoing development. Staff are very supportive of each other and willingly share ideas. For example, many classes benefit from the introduction of the English as a second language strategy to enhance the learning experience within the classroom. Staff are confident in the use of computers and laptops; these skills enhance the quality of instructional activities.

The principal is respected for his professional knowledge and his capacity to make change happen successfully. He has created a supportive environment where staff feel valued. The principal and the assistant principals regularly observe teaching and give constructive feedback about the outcomes of these observations. They are fully aware of the strengths and areas for development of all teachers. They plan collaboratively along with other key staff to improve instruction. A particular focus has been on improving comprehension. Coaches have been modelling strategies for dealing with this issue with students. The scaffolding strategies have been successful in supporting students in their reading, critical thinking and writing skills.

The school is welcoming to students, parents and visitors. It is managed well and effective systems and procedures ensure that the school runs efficiently. Students know where to go and what to do if they need help or advice. The school works well with outside agencies and institutions. It maintains strong ties with the Teachers College who provide Professional Development in literacy initiatives. The outcome of this link has been a more positive integration of literacy into the curriculum. The Project Art partnership provides an effective extra curricular program in music and art. Parents are encouraged to take part in the school through involvement with field trips and visits. The school is successful in promoting family participation and support through its open communication with parents.

**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 effectively evaluates its long-term and short-term goals in relation to students' needs and progress. Senior leaders have a regular schedule of meetings to identify ongoing issues connected with student progress. For example, the outcomes of reviews of student achievement highlighted the need for greater consistency in the assessments of 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. The effectiveness of teachers became the focus of intervention strategies or support. Individual reviews with teachers are also a measure of the effectiveness of the school's work. The outcomes of these monitoring procedures lead to an effective reconstitution of one of the Academy's.

The regular reporting cycles provide effective evidence of student progress and where interventions may need to be made to address issues. For example, the necessity to improve essay writing skills in grade 5 prompted the implementation of staff training and curriculum planning activities. The use of data as a diagnostic tool to evaluate the progress of specific groups is being appropriately established through periodic assessment, particularly for English language learners. The school has shown its ability to be adaptable to students' needs through its reconfiguration of the science program and its implementation of the mathematics curriculum workshop model. Staff have a clear perception of the goals and core purposes of the school which drive its work. The evidence of this is shown in the help staff give each other, the involvement with extended day activities and the extracurricular programs. The staff show they have the capacity to build on their successes and promote the academic achievement of students even further.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: The Elmhurst School- PS 89 Q</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>			<b>X</b>

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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"> <li>• each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>			<b>X</b>
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"> <li>• ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students*</li> </ul>			<b>X</b>
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"> <li>• all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>			<b>X</b>
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.		<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>

\* 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.

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X
<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X
<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>		X	