



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Edward Kennedy Ellington School**

**Public School 140**

**166 - 01 116th Avenue  
Queens  
NY 11434**

**Principal: Elaine Brittenum**

**Dates of review: November 29 - 30 & December 1, 2006**

**Reviewer: Lys Bradley**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Edward Kennedy Ellington is a neighborhood elementary school serving 784 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 6. The school receives Title 1 funding with student eligibility that is higher than the City average.

The school population is somewhat less stable than other schools when compared with available data. Most students are Black (89.8%) with 7.8% Hispanic and the remainder Asian or White. The number of English language learners is growing but still only represents 3.4% of the school enrollment. Most of these students' first language is Spanish or Haitian Creole. The number of special education students is also increasing with 6% taught in self-contained classes and a further 8% taught in mainstream classes and pulled out for additional support.

Attendance stands at 93.1%, an increase of 1.4% over the previous year. This compares favorably with similar schools and is just above the City average.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal has very high expectations of what her students can achieve and is a strong advocate for each and every one.
- The administration knows the student body well and is quick to take action in the students' interests.
- The school is highly effective in utilizing all available data to ensure that those students most at risk have every chance to succeed.
- The school has a number of highly functioning teams who support teachers' professional development.
- Students like coming to school, are eager to learn and behave well.
- The school has been successful in raising levels of attendance and in eliminating suspensions.
- The principal has a good grasp of the importance of formative assessment and has encouraged many staff to make good use of a range of relevant information to set goals and drive instruction.
- The Comprehensive Education Plan has a small number of specific goals, with measurable criteria and clear lines of accountability, which drive school improvement.
- There is a strong core of interested parents who are actively involved in many aspects of school life and the school never ceases to explore ways to involve those parents who are hard to reach.

### What the school needs to improve

- Establish greater consistency in the quality of teaching so that all teaching aspires to the best practice and students make the same rates of progress in every grade.
- Further develop teachers' use of formative assessment so that programs of study are adapted and instruction is differentiated to provide the right levels of challenge for all students in the same class.
- Build on the solid foundations already established to enable all teachers to make effective use of all relevant data in monitoring and evaluating the impact of teaching and the curriculum on students' progress.
- Extend teachers' use of rubrics to sharpen differentiation and involve all students in setting individual targets for learning and in evaluating their own progress.
- Raise achievement in science by evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum and by making regular interim assessments of students' progress.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

**This is a proficient school with many well-developed features.**

Public School 140 is led by a principal who is passionate about education and intent on expanding the life chances of every student. She brought the school out of corrective action within one year of being appointed and, over the following four years, has continued to implement improvements to make students, staff and parents feel proud of the students' achievements.

The administration and the professional development team have made significant achievements through strong collaboration and the willingness to work hard. The vast majority of the staff have worked with diligence and determination to improve their practice, to familiarize themselves with new instructional programs and to use information from tests and diagnostic assessment to tailor programs to meet individual needs. As a direct consequence, the school has some highly effective teams.

The principal has done her utmost, along with her two assistant principals, to hold each member of staff accountable for their students' progress and to provide whatever support and guidance they need to succeed. The school has much to be proud of and significant areas of strength. However, there are a small number of teachers who do not have the same high expectations of themselves or of their students. This results in students making better progress in some classes and grades than in others. The level of inconsistency is too high and the administration is doing everything in its power to remedy the situation for the students' benefit. The school has come a long way under the principal's energetic and relentless quest for the best and has the capacity to advance further.

### 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 principal maintains a relentless focus on establishing rigorous systems and making use of every piece of relevant data and information to check on the progress of individuals, groups, classes and grades at regular intervals. There has been extensive professional development for staff on how to interpret information from a range of sources, and solutions found for making the collection and analysis of data manageable.

The academic intervention team and the professional development team are instrumental in providing tailor-made programs for special education students and English language learners. The principal holds staff accountable for tracking the progress of individual and groups and is diligent in seeking feedback, realigning programs and raising expectations where necessary. The school also looks at performance by gender and ethnicity, as well as being assiduous in monitoring the progress of high achievers, homeless students and those in foster care. The principal is sensitive to the differing needs of the various ethnic

groups within the school population and ensures that any student new to the school has their specific needs assessed as a matter of urgency.

The school is creative in its use of data and looks beyond student performance to understand other factors that may impact on students' ability to succeed. The discovery that, among parents, there are a significant number of single fathers has led to the formation of a support group with social activities to involve them actively in the school community.

The principal keeps the administration, the school leadership team and staff focused by providing sharp power point presentations of comparative data to enable them to identify trends over time at grade and subject level and to compare how well they are doing in comparison to similar schools and the City average.

**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 principal delegates well and has developed a sophisticated accountability system for administrators, teachers and other staff to check regularly on progress. She has actively encouraged collaboration within and across grades. She deploys her assistant principals effectively to keep track of performance and progress in different parts of the school against measurable goals which relate specifically to grades, subjects or levels of performance of groups such as English language learners. These administrators are also instrumental in providing support to those few teachers who do not ensure that their students have an appropriate rate of progress because their expectations are not high enough.

The school has been successful in enabling all students to achieve level 2 or better. The work of the academic intervention team remains targeted principally at level 2 students in their efforts to increase the proportion of students who may be promoted. Some recent admissions to the school are lower-achieving. However, the school is quick to administer a careful diagnostic assessment to new entrants in order to design a program to meet individual needs. It has also established a well-attended Saturday school to accelerate the progress of those students most at risk.

Parents and students are left in no doubt about the principal's high expectations of each member of the school community and her belief in the students' ability to succeed in an academic environment. There is effective two way communication between parents and the school, both informal and formal. Both parents and their children understand what their goals are and what they have to do to improve their scores. The Saturday symposium has been particularly successful in putting parents 'in their children's shoes', as students in a particular grade, in order to understand precisely what is expected of them as they move from grade to grade.

**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.**

The school has made careful choices in determining the most appropriate programs that meet State and City requirements. It has also, importantly, enabled teachers to achieve the school's goals and provided them with good levels of support in assessing students and making effective use of pertinent information in planning the next steps in learning. Teachers have welcomed America's Choice as it provides them with clear standards and rubrics and has a built-in module that promotes students' involvement in writing rubrics. However, not all teachers are using the rubrics to differentiate work to provide the right level of challenge for students of different performance in the same class. In addition, there is not yet consistency in the use of rubrics to provide clear guidance to students on the strengths of their work and where they need to improve, or in involving them in assessing their own work.

The school does not have an abundance of resources but the school leadership team makes sure that budgeting decisions are driven by the school's priorities and a thorough analysis of all available data. The assignment of staff, use of time and the grouping of students is always based on what is in the best interests of the students.

The school has been successful in driving up rates of attendance by providing activities that really engage students, both in the classroom and outside, such as dance classes and the chance to spend the week on a farm in Vermont to understand what rural life is all about. Students want to come to school and would rather arrive late than not attend at all. They know that there is always someone to turn to should they have a problem and that the staff care about them and generally operate in their best interest.

The recent appointment of a male assistant principal for the upper grades who provides a strong role model for the students and works closely with the counselors and dean, has been instrumental, in the parents' view, in eliminating suspensions. Student behavior is generally good and in some classes very good.

**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.**

The principal is a highly respected leader who parents recognize as a strong advocate for children. Parents on the school leadership team are knowledgeable and dedicated, and appreciate that the principal's assertiveness comes from a deep understanding of education and a desire to see every student from Public School 140 graduate. Most members of staff, whatever their area of expertise and status, pull together to make sure that the school runs smoothly.

The administration has placed a strong emphasis on the interpretation and use of data in its professional development programs. However, there is still some way to go in ensuring an acceptable level of consistency in the way that individual teachers and grades make effective use of all available data in monitoring and evaluating the impact of teaching and the curriculum on students' progress. The school appoints staff who have the skills and

curriculum expertise to meet the students' needs, but an understanding of the importance of data is not paramount among appointment criteria.

The formation of a professional development team has ensured that the content of programs for staff derives from close scrutiny of the data and that the impact of training, guidance and support is carefully evaluated in a number of ways. The administration is focused on making effective use of regular classroom observations to check on adherence to policies, procedures and timescales, as well as looking at the impact of instruction on students' learning, progress and achievement. Most teachers derive great benefit from collaborative discussion and planning, and the opportunity to learn from each other. A small number of teachers have not adjusted their practices to match the school's high expectations. Nor have they taken advantage of the support and guidance focused on helping them develop their practice. This is what accounts for unacceptable differences in the quality of teaching within and between grades.

The school has developed strong partnerships with outside bodies to add breadth and depth to the experiences of students. There is also good liaison with those outside bodies who contribute to intervention programs.

**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 Comprehensive Education Plan is well structured. It has a small number of clearly identified priorities, each with specific and measurable indicators of success that are related to each grade or the upper and lower grades in the school. Individual staff know which aspects they are held accountable for and meet with a member of the administration to report on progress at very regular intervals.

The administration makes extensive use of data to compare performance and progress within and across grades and for individuals and groups of students and does all in its power to remedy weaknesses and share best practice. Teams, such as the academic intervention team, take their responsibilities for monitoring progress of individuals very seriously and have a rigorous process for decision-making. The principal has her finger on the pulse and checks with grade leaders, coaches and the assistant principals if anything of concern is noted on her walkthroughs. Not every grade team is equally thorough in its use of periodic assessment and diagnostic measures and this sometimes prevents timely action being taken to the students' detriment

Concern for the comparatively low performance of students in science led to the appointment of a new science teacher who has succeeded in motivating students. This teacher has not yet established rigorous procedures to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum to make regular interim assessments of students' achievement in the same way that teachers do in English language arts and mathematics in order to track their progress.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Edward Kennedy Ellington School (PS 140)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		X	

<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>			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"> <li>• ethnic groups, English Language Learners, special education students*</li> </ul>			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"> <li>• all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>			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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			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.

<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.			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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			X

<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	