



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Margaret Emery - Elm Park School**

**Public School 021**

**168 Hooker Street  
Staten Island  
NY 10302**

**Principal: Gina Moreno**

**Dates of review: January 4 - 5, 2007**

**Reviewer: Joan L. Johnston**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Margaret Emery – Elm Park School is located on Staten Island and has 501 students enrolled in grades pre-kindergarten through 5. Forty two percent of the students are Hispanic, 31% are Black, 21% are White and 6% are Asian and other ethnicities. Approximately 4% of the students receive special education services and 25% are English language learners, mainly of Mexican ancestry.

The school receives Title I funding, with 77% of the students being eligible. This percentage is the same as at similar schools, but higher than the City-wide average. Student stability is 92% which is comparable to both City and similar schools. Attendance figures are close to both City and similar school averages, with students in attendance about 92% of the time.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal is a respected leader who is visible, responsive and nurturing.
- Together with the new assistant principal, who complements the style and skills of the principal, there is an effective administrative team poised to move the school forward.
- The school uses State, City and interim assessment data effectively to improve learning for targeted populations.
- Bilingual staff members are now available to support the communication needs of non-English speaking parents and this is providing improved links between home and school.
- The school is well managed and organized to support learning.
- The school provides a good array of supports for lower-achieving students.
- The school offers a wide range of enriching experiences and these successfully expand opportunities for a student population that may not have access outside the school setting.

### What the school needs to improve

- Implement an accessible system for tracking individual student performance data over time.
- Assess the effectiveness of the academic intervention services offered to ensure that they are targeted to meet the needs of individual students.
- Monitor the success of the professional development plan for English language learners.
- Assure the alignment of the elementary science and social studies curricula with State standards and assessments.
- Provide additional professional development opportunities in the balanced literacy initiative to take building-wide instruction, especially in writing, to the next level.
- Provide a daily physical outlet for youthful energy and exuberance in the absence of a gymnasium and a cluster-based physical education program.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a proficient school.**

The principal is in her fourth year as the school leader and an assistant principal was appointed last spring. The principal is now able to focus greater attention on improving classroom instruction, student learning and enhancing the program at the school. Public School 21 is a school on the move. There is now a leadership team in place to guide improvement efforts. There is a positive climate in the school and a collaborative working relationship among faculty, administrators and parents. Parent involvement is not as extensive as it could be, but both a plan and a new parent coordinator are in place to address this problem.

The main school building is 100 years old with a more recent annex. A number of projects have helped to make the school more attractive in appearance, but facilities such as the cafeteria and auditorium are small and a gymnasium is non-existent. The school has developed effective partnerships with outside organizations that expand opportunities for students. The principal is aware of the needs of the population the school serves and works hard to expand opportunities for her students.

### 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 proficient.**

The school collects and analyses a significant amount of student performance data and makes good use of a number of tools and systems provided by the City to analyze this information. Faculty members receive and review copies of these reports for their classes and use this information effectively with their students to improve the progress they make with their learning. Both students and their parents are encouraged to access individual interim assessments from the City's website as a means of encouraging them to keep themselves informed and as a way to encourage them to set targets for what they wish to achieve.

Portfolios of student work contain writing samples collected throughout the school year to show the progress made over time. The school produces benchmarks for every child in October, January and May. These provide numeric goals. Progress is measured at these points in time to see if the child is at, above or below the benchmark. These systems are helping teachers to accelerate the progress students are making with their learning. Mathematics and literacy coaches assist with analyzing performance data by classroom, gender and ethnicity. Results of English language learners, who make up a large portion of the student population, receive particular attention. Information gleaned from these evaluations support teachers in tailoring instruction to the needs of their students and in providing academic intervention services to students falling below targeted performance levels. However, the lack of an accessible system for tracking individual student performance data over time, and too little staff understanding of the New York Starts data,

hinders this process. The school leadership evaluates the data for each grade level and the principal compares performance with other local schools and schools across the City.

**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 proficient.**

The school has appropriate structures for planning and goal setting. These include the school leadership team, the instructional team, a pupil progress team and parent meetings. A new parent coordinator, who speaks Spanish, was recently appointed with the focus to involve more parents in school activities and events. A first-rate guide for new parents has been developed that is available in both English and Spanish versions. Links between home and school are improving. School leaders and faculty are becoming more effective in using data to set measurable improvement goals for students. An identified goal for the year is to provide teacher training to use student performance and assessment data to better identify student strengths and weaknesses and to assist in grouping students more effectively. This is especially true for English language learners. There is an emphasis on improving instruction and outcomes for this targeted subgroup.

The pupil progress team meets monthly to discuss students who are having difficulties. This team includes the principal, psychologist, social worker, academic coaches and teachers who provide special education, English language learner, and academic support services. Particular attention is given to improving the progress of those students who are most at risk. Recommendations are made for each student referred to the team. Follow-up and progress monitoring is assigned to an individual member of the team. The school provides a good array of supports for lower-achieving students. However, the school does not yet assess the effectiveness of the services offered to ensure that they are targeted most effectively to meet the needs of individual students.

The school leadership team has developed the Comprehensive Education Plan with identified improvement goals for the school year. The executive summary for the 2006-07 school year accurately identifies specific areas for improvement that are linked to an analyses of data from various reports. Areas of weakness are identified and initiatives planned to address stated concerns. For example, this year there is a more concerted emphasis on looking at individual student work, especially writing samples.

**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 instructional program focuses on mathematics using the Everyday Math curriculum and English language arts using the balanced literacy approach. Both areas are supported by instructional coaches who work well to assure alignment across classrooms at each grade level. The school recognizes the need for additional professional development opportunities in balanced literacy in order to take building-wide instruction, especially in writing, to the next level. In an effort to accelerate learning at the earliest stage, kindergarten classes now use a computer-based program which engages these

young students in developing their literacy skills. Budgeting decisions, including staffing and scheduling, are appropriately targeted at the school's priorities. Teachers collaborate effectively as a team to improve student learning. For example, after analyzing the performance of grade 5 students on the State social studies test, they noted that student writing skills were weak. They worked with the social studies teacher to develop an improvement plan. While the social studies teacher works on content knowledge, instruction is now reinforced in each classroom with a greater emphasis on writing. However, the school has not assured the alignment of the social studies and elementary science curricula with State standards and assessments.

Teachers recognize their responsibility for improving student outcomes. In their classrooms they have learned to more effectively use flexible groups and to differentiate instruction. Students willingly engage in their learning as a result. There is an academic intervention services teacher assigned full time to each grade level. That teacher pushes in to the classroom to work with targeted students, which is helping to improve identified skills. The principal has expanded the staff to include an additional English as a second language (ESL) teacher. The ESL teachers also provide professional development for kindergarten through grade 5 classroom teachers and have developed an ESL center-based activity basket for each classroom. Listening activities are the major focus, with students' skills improving as a result.

Students enjoy coming to school and believe that their teachers "explain the work and try to help us learn". They know their teachers "expect a lot" from them in the classroom. They appreciate the enriching activities such as the greenhouse for science projects, artwork, and use of computer laptops. They wish that physical education was part of the curriculum, but enjoy the after school sports programs the new assistant principal has introduced. Student attendance is afforded a high priority, with high attendance recognized and rewarded.

**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 focused on developing a faculty that 'cares about the kids' and will 'go the extra mile' to support learning. She looks for those who understand and have an ability to meet the needs of the large ESL population in the school as well as those of their parents. Together with the new assistant principal, who complements the style and skills of the principal, there is an effective administrative team poised to move the school forward. The new assistant principal has freed up time for the principal to get into more classrooms for focused walkthroughs. Feedback after these informal visits celebrates successful efforts and brings areas in need of improvement to the attention of teachers. A similar process is used for formal evaluations. Teachers work with the academic coaches or attend regional training workshops when needed. The principal is a respected leader who is visible, responsive and nurturing. Teachers indicate that their principal is supportive and provides the materials and training they need to improve. The school is well managed and organized to support learning.

Teachers have input into identifying areas for professional development and completed a survey that addressed their needs last year. Many participated in the Orton-Gillingham training coordinated by the assistant principal. This year this multi-sensory approach is part of the literacy instructional block. The faculty is using the book 'Reading, Writing and

Learning in ESL' as a discussion point at grade level meetings. Teachers are improving their strategies for teaching language acquisition skills, although the school has yet to fully monitor the success of the professional development plan for English language learners. Nevertheless, more students are improving on the State test administered to English language learners.

Students would like to see the library collection built up to include more challenging selections and chapter books. They also wish there was more space in the school, especially for a gymnasium. A good variety of effective partnerships with external organizations support the school in achieving its goals.

**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 for the school provides a blueprint for implementation of stated goals and interventions. Interim goals have not yet been established, although appropriate structures exist to monitor and evaluate progress towards the longer-term goals. Interim assessments are in place and comparisons, for example between classes and for particular groups of students, are made to inform judgments. Outcomes are also used effectively to adjust instruction and provide interventions for targeted students. Each of the school's long-term plans are established following an appropriate review of student performance data, as well as the impact of the previous plan.

There is not a school-wide data reporting system that tracks individual student performance over time. Teachers utilize student performance data to monitor progress, but still need additional training and support to use it more effectively. The pupil progress team meets regularly to review the caseload of students experiencing academic difficulties or who are in need of student support services. Appropriate interventions or supports are recommended and follow-up action is taken, although the impact of this has yet to be fully evaluated.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Margaret Emery – Elm Park School (PS 21)</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	