



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Elmhurst School

Elementary School 089

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

Principal: Casper A. Cacioppo

Dates of review: March 10 - 12, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Tony Boys

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Elmhurst is an elementary school with 1602 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 75% Hispanic, 5% White and 19% Asian students. The student body includes 54% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 - 2007 was 95.2%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 85% eligibility.

The Elmhurst is one of the largest elementary schools in the City. The school was restructured six years ago into three vertical academies to allow students and parents more personalized attention. The Elmhurst celebrates its centenary this year and is still housed in the original building, with some later additions.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal works extremely well with administration to pursue a shared vision of raising achievement for the school's diverse population.
- Teachers use assessment systems very effectively, gaining an excellent understanding of students' learning and progress to inform planning.
- Behavior and relationships are very positive because the school conveys very high expectations of work and conduct to students, parents and staff.
- The school values and benefits from a high level of support from parents, keeping them very well informed about their children's goals and progress.
- Administration monitors learning very effectively, ensuring that instruction engages students' interest, within a very positive and safe environment.
- Attendance is high because students enjoy school and systems to follow up on absence very clear and are implemented very well.
- Administration uses data and classroom observation extremely effectively to help teachers improve instruction and to plan professional development.
- Teachers have frequent opportunities to plan together, observe each other teaching and share good practice through professional dialogue.
- New and inexperienced teachers receive excellent support from coaches, lead teachers and colleagues to help them hone their skills.
- The school has a very wide range of partnerships with outside agencies to enhance the curriculum and enrich students' experience.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to focus sharply on developing strategies to raise the achievement of English language learners in English language arts.
- Refine systems for setting interim goals for students, to share good practice in helping them to understand how they can improve.
- Extend the existing good practice in differentiation to meet individual needs in all aspects of instruction.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

The principal and administration lead the school's three academies extremely well in pursuing a shared vision of raising achievement for all students, many of whom are English language learners. The school has very effective assessment systems, enabling teachers to have an excellent understanding of students' learning and progress to help them plan instruction. This, together with effective instruction, enables students to make very good progress in math, when compared with similar schools. Progress is less consistent in English language arts for the school's high proportion of English language learners. The school is constantly striving to improve further the progress of these students. Students, parents and staff understand and support the school's very high expectations of work and conduct, resulting in very positive behavior and relationships. Parents give the school strong support because it values and encourages their involvement, keeping them very well informed about their children's progress. Attendance rates are high because the school rewards good attendance, students enjoy school and systems to follow up on absence are very clear and effective.

Administration uses data, supported by frequent classroom observations, to plan training and to help teachers improve instruction by giving them very helpful feedback. This encourages a very positive and safe environment for learning, with instruction that interests and engages students. Teachers plan well to meet the needs of individual students who are working in groups or pairs. Differentiation is less effective in some lessons when whole class instruction is taking place. Teachers in all grades are using assessment data to set improvement goals for students. There is some inconsistency in the extent to which these goals focus on the specific detail of areas that students need to concentrate on to improve their work. The school supports teachers very well, giving them frequent opportunities to plan together, to observe each other teaching and to share good practice through professional dialogue. New and inexperienced teachers benefit from the excellent support of coaches, lead teachers and colleagues. This helps them to settle quickly into school and to improve their instructional skills.

The school has developed a very wide range of partnerships with outside agencies and community based organizations. These provide very valuable support to enrich and enhance the curriculum through academic, artistic, cultural and sporting activities, both within and beyond the school day. The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report by introducing curriculum changes, providing additional training, appointing new staff and reviewing monitoring activities. The data inquiry team is fully operational and meets regularly to review and promote the progress of identified students within each academy.

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 the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is outstanding.

The school has continued to build on the very good practice seen in the previous Quality Review. Assessment systems are rigorous and comprehensive, drawing on a very wide range of diagnostic tools to build up a detailed picture of each student's achievement. In addition to formal periodic and end-of-unit assessments in math and English language arts, the school has developed its own writing assessment tool with school-wide benchmark levels. The inquiry team is developing methods to improve reading fluency to support improved comprehension. These strategies illustrate the school's determination to raise achievement in literacy, which is a barrier to learning for many of its students. Teachers also gather data through less formal means by assessing students' work in lessons, through homework and by conferencing with individuals to monitor progress and identify learning needs. The school further reinforces these systems by maintaining extremely useful individual student portfolios to track each student's development throughout the year. Special education students and English language learners have additional assessments and programs to promote their learning, providing a very detailed picture of their progress. Assessment and its implications is a constant focus of discussion and planning for administration, ensuring that it is kept high in the school's priorities. The school puts a great deal of effort into analyzing its performance over time and into comparing the progress of different groups of students. The principal has analyzed the performance of similar schools in detail and has looked closely at the successful strategies they use to raise achievement. The assistant principals work together extremely well to ensure that teachers in all three academies have a thorough understanding of assessment systems. Very effective training reinforces this understanding so that all teachers are confident and skilful in assessing progress and analyzing data. Taken overall, the high quality of the school's assessment systems ensures that teachers have an excellent understanding of students' learning and progress. This has a very positive impact on achievement.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

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

Administration, coaches and teachers work very well together to set goals based on analysis of assessment data. Cabinet discussions focus strongly on setting goals and devising strategies to achieve them. These discussions feed into faculty and grade conferences so that coaches, lead teachers and class teachers can be fully involved in setting the school's improvement goals. In addition, the school has a Comprehensive Education Plan committee that draws up overall goals based on assessment evidence. This leads to production and review of the Comprehensive Education Plan. The school focuses strongly on educational goals in framing its development plans. Cabinet discussions are thorough, based closely on data analysis and clearly identify goals to meet the needs of specific groups of students. As a result of these strategies, the school

has been very successful in promoting students' progress in math, where the results are well above the average for similar schools. It has been less successful in raising achievement in English language arts although results in the subject are average. These differences in performance reflect the school's high proportion of English language learners. The school shares its goals extremely effectively with the community, ensuring that students, parents and staff are aware of and support its high expectations of work and conduct. These goals and expectations are reinforced at all events involving parents and through information sent home. As a result, parents understand the school's goals and expectations very well and give the school strong support. They affirm that communication is very effective, ensuring that they are very well informed about their children's progress. In addition to parent-teacher conferences and report cards, they receive bulletins, newsletters, individual letters, phone calls and a monthly calendar to keep them informed. As a result they feel that the school involves them extremely well in their children's education.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

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

The curriculum is broad and balanced, allowing students to study art and music programs in addition to all mandatory subjects. Outside the school day, students have access to academic enrichment classes and a wide range of sports and activities including dance, drama, music, soccer and basketball. The school also operates a Renzulli learning program for higher achieving students. Courses in English language arts and math have full in-built assessment schemes and are supported by appropriate programs for special education students and English language learners. The school supplements these assessments with external tests and through informal assessments in class. This allows teachers access to a wide range of meaningful interim data about students' progress. As a result, teachers differentiate instruction well for students working in small groups or pairs. Differentiation is less effective in some lessons when whole class instruction is taking place. The school has extremely effective systems for holding teachers accountable for the quality of instruction and for students' progress. Administration carries out formal observations and conducts regular walk-throughs, using detailed checklists to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction and the quality of the learning environment. Teachers get detailed feedback to help them to develop further their skills. They attest to finding this very useful in maintaining a high quality of instruction that engages and motivates students. The clearly evident atmosphere of trust and respect between students and staff further enhances the learning environment. Consequently, students behave very well and enjoy school. Attendance rates are high because the school rewards good attendance and systems to follow up on absence are very clear and effective.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is outstanding.

The school has highly effective systems for planning, training and improving instruction.

The principal and administration use frequent classroom observations, supported by careful analysis of data, to plan very effective professional development and to give teachers constructive feedback on all aspects of their performance. This allows professional development to be targeted on specific needs to help meet the school's improvement goals. The school also gives teachers ample time to observe each other teaching and to see demonstration lessons given by coaches and lead teachers. In addition, teachers have common preparation time and extra planning days, during which they can share good practice and engage in professional dialogue. All teachers affirm that they receive excellent support from administration, lead teachers and coaches. New and inexperienced teachers receive additional support from mentors and colleagues to help them become rapidly established in the school and to improve their skills. They are extremely positive about the level of support and training they receive.

Despite the age of the building, the school has very good facilities for teaching, including a large and well-stocked library and an excellent science laboratory. The school has also developed extremely productive partnerships with a very wide range of outside agencies, which strongly support the curriculum and instruction. They provide numerous opportunities for students to participate in academic and social activities that enrich their learning and promote their development. For example, the school's partners provide classes in academic subjects as well as art and music, and the school has a partnership with the Boy Scouts that promotes social responsibility for its male students. The school also has a health center, operated by Elmhurst hospital, to promote quality health care. The school's arrangements for supporting teachers and enriching the curriculum have a very positive effect on instruction and learning.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

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

The principal works extremely well with his assistant principals to provide strong and purposeful leadership in pursuing the school's goals. This is based on a very clear vision of raising achievement for all the school's population, many of whom are English language learners from the Asian and Hispanic communities. The school places raising achievement at the center of its activities and focuses strongly on using data to identify needs and set goals. Planning is thorough and focuses on strategies to improve learning and achievement. This is clearly evident in the work of the cabinet, which uses detailed analysis of data to inform planning. These plans make good use of interim goals to set benchmarks by which the progress and effectiveness of strategies can be measured. Teachers also set interim goals for students, so that their progress can be broken down into small steps and monitored closely. All teachers are setting goals in this way, although there is some inconsistency in the extent to which these goals concentrate on specific details of the areas on which students need to concentrate in order to improve their work. The school has very good systems for reviewing its plans and revising strategies in the light of experience. Administration regularly considers the progress and effectiveness of plans and takes effective action to modify strategies where necessary. This ensures that the school is flexible in coping with changing demands. The effectiveness of the school's systems for planning and review has a strong influence in keeping it on track in pursuing its goals of raising achievement for all its students.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Elmhurst School	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
Quality Score				X	

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?					X
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?					X
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?					X
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?					X
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?					X
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?					X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1					X

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?			X		
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?				X	
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?				X	
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?					X
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?			X		
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?					X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.					
To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?					X
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?					X
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?					X
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?					X
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?					X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4					X

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.					
To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?				X	
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?				X	
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?				X	
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?				X	
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?					X
Overall score for Quality Statement 5					X

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped