



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

**Quality Review Report
Office of Accountability
2008-2009**

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

The Early Childhood Magnet School

Elementary School 251

155-51 Arthur Street

Queens

NY 11413

Principal: Edna A. Loncke

Dates of review: March 10 – 11 2009

Lead Reviewer: Lenon Murray

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Early Childhood Magnet School is an elementary school with 410 students from kindergarten through grade 3. The school population comprises 94% Black, 2% Hispanic, 3% White and 1.5% Asian students. The student body includes 0.01% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 93.7%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding. The principal was newly appointed last summer and assumed leadership at the beginning of the school year in September 2008.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The new principal has worked on creating a school community where there is emphasis on teamwork and collaboration. The parents and staff have forged a relationship where there is shared responsibility for raising student achievement. This has resulted in a happy school with a positive tone that supports student learning. Goal setting has improved from the previous school year to most subject areas and is in place for all students and student sub-groups. Goals are evident for English language arts, math and science. Goals are not as clear in other subjects. There is now wider use of data throughout the school and involvement of parents in data discussions.

The administration has brought the school to an early childhood focus. Visual arts are a part of the robust curriculum and center areas for play and exploration are evident in the common areas. This has nurtured a love of learning in the students that makes parents quite proud of the school. Students are willing to share their goals and discuss their portfolios of work with confidence. Teachers use clear rubrics, familiar to students to evaluate and assess work. The school is developing systems to enable students to work with their peers to reflect on their learning.

Teachers now have strong input to their own professional goal setting. This has led to an inter-disciplinary approach to teaching across core subjects. Teachers are encouraged to pursue professional learning both within and outside of the building. Teachers receive consistent, specific feedback from school leaders' walkthroughs and observations. Several teachers said, "We are being treated like professionals now and our opinions are really respected". Teachers specifically stated in large and small groups that they welcome their inclusion in the planning and decision-making.

Parents are an integral part of all aspects of school life. This has resulted in an increased volunteer presence throughout the day. The parent coordinator is accessible and tirelessly seeks to resolve parent concerns before they escalate. Parents support the work of the teachers and the home/school communication is strong. The school surveys parents to inform decisions about workshops. Teachers routinely return parents' phone calls. They engage in meaningful discussion about specific strategies to help children at home. The school leadership actively fosters a warm, caring atmosphere that facilitates the building of mutual trust.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal effectively communicates her vision for school improvement and high student achievement to faculty, parents, students and the community.
- The school has increased the quality and quantity of data available to analyze and monitor achievement of individual students, sub-groups and whole groups.
- The administration provides individualized professional development opportunities to all faculty members, with a strong focus on instructional skills in English language arts, math and science.
- The school recognizes parents as partners in the educational achievement of their children, providing workshops and encouraging parental participation.
- The school has a robust curriculum with a strong emphasis on literacy and an inter-disciplinary approach that engages students and encourages them to become high achievers.
- School leaders regularly examine student level data to monitor performance, curricular decisions and academic intervention and make adjustments that improve student outcomes.

What the school needs to improve

- Expand the use of data to establish systemic protocols for setting measurable learning goals for individual students and groups of students in all core subjects in addition to English language arts, math and science.
- Build on the newly established systems that increase teacher involvement in whole-school planning and shared decision-making to improve student achievement in all subject areas.
- Improve the development and implementation of a comprehensive guidance plan that supports students in the community and eases the transition to the next school level.
- Refine the assessment system teachers use to implement differentiation so that it includes all the core subject areas.

Part 3: Main Findings

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school collects a wide range of data based on standardized tests, unit tests, teacher assessments, on-demand writing and Teachers College assessments. This information enables the administration and faculty to have an accurate picture of students' performance and progress. This information is used to analyze student outcomes including sub-groups such as gender, students with disabilities and English language learners. Teachers keep assessment information in binders convenient for their use at the classroom level. The principal has expressed firm commitment to using data to drive all decision making which has led to her purchasing commercially available web based systems. The data specialist has provided professional development in data analysis that has increased the comfort level of teachers with technology.

Parents have expressed appreciation for the school's efforts to communicate their children's performance in a timely manner. Teachers meet with students during the workshop teaching periods in a conferring process. This allows them to keep students aware of their daily progress. Parents are called regularly to discuss their children's strengths and challenges. Apart from the major parent/teacher conferences at the times the report cards are issued, teachers make individual appointments to converse with parents. The principal has an open door policy for both teachers and parents, and is willing to use current data as the basis for conversations about student achievement.

The administration has taken a reflective approach to an analysis of past performance. The information is used to discuss school wide issues and plan proactive remedial approaches. This has led to the realization that boys have been reading with greater fluency, but girls have much deeper comprehension. Both the parent coordinator and the teachers have conducted workshops for parents that enable them to assist their children with homework and academic challenges better.

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 proficient.

The administration has involved parents and teachers fully in the development of the school's Comprehensive Education Plan. The school has worked to establish goals and benchmarks in English language arts, math and science that are better than goals set in other core subjects. Goal setting is not consistently evident in social studies, physical education and the arts. Teachers are scheduled with two common preparation periods each week that facilitate effective common planning and goal setting on each grade. As

teachers confer with students, they develop individual goals with them based on their levels of understanding and achievement. The quality of these goals varies. “Smart” goals are not at the same high level for all students. Students in the upper grades have the most specific goals. Teachers have goals for their kindergarten and first grade students but do not usually engage in sufficient discussion with these children so they know what they are. Students are unclear about their specific next steps unless they are prompted. Individual students’ portfolios are kept to monitor students work and progress including reading levels. Classroom teachers at each grade level are consistent in their approach to data collection and goal setting. However, systematic differentiation of instruction does not always occur in cluster classes.

No formal system is evident in which teachers directly solicit parental input in the establishment of student goals or secure agreement on their child’s learning style. Parents help their children at home with methods from their own past educational experiences. They express confidence in the methods and teaching techniques employed by teachers on behalf of their children. Parents do feel comfortable with their access to the teachers. One parent said, “Teachers do return our calls regularly.” Students’ progress can increasingly be accessed on-line but parents do not take full advantage of this facility. The school’s leaders and faculty communicate high expectations in several ways. The principal addresses parent meetings and workshops regularly. She also greets the students with a challenge over the public address system each morning as they begin their day. Parents have said that the expectations for children at the highest end of the performance spectrum need to be raised. Students are highly engaged in the classrooms and insufficient attention is given to the needs of high achieving students who finish their work quickly. Common practice is for these students to select a book and read independently. Students have welcomed challenges stating flatly that, “A lot of the work is easy and fun”.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The school’s curriculum is broad, robust with a strong focus on literacy. The administration uses literacy to push achievement in all subject areas stating, “If the child can’t read, she can’t do math or science.” Independent reading is strongly emphasized across the content areas. Students are explicitly taught to write about their reading. This has led to an inter-disciplinary approach to teaching based on the Teacher’s College workshop model. Decisions related to the curriculum occur in collaborative ways driven by high standards and academic rigor. The administration has conceded that social studies, physical education, art and music have not received the same dedicated attention as English language arts, math and science with curriculum development. The majority of students in discussion groups and classrooms consider their favorite subjects to be English language arts, math or science. The administration and faculty have set up a curriculum committee that is looking into ways of enhancing social studies in the school.

The principal makes budgetary decisions strategically to spread limited resources as effectively as possible to provide services essential to strong early childhood education. She maintains small classes and ensures quality classroom libraries for independent reading. The school also has an upgraded science lab, with both desktop and laptop

computers. The administration intends to increase the technology in the classrooms. She has replenished the play areas and classroom centers with blocks, sand, educational toys and manipulative of all types which buttresses the daily reading and writing assignments.

The school has moved to address issues from the Learning Environment Survey resulting in a calm and well-ordered learning environment. The students receive character education and teachers work together to resolve student behavioral issues in the classrooms. Students are actively engaged in the classrooms and for the most part teachers know their levels and work to address them in differentiated lessons. Differentiation is utilized largely by product and content. Differentiated instruction by process is seen in some classrooms where the needs of high achieving students are adequately addressed. Vocabulary is explicitly taught and word walls are available in classrooms across subject areas.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

School leaders monitor instruction and student outcomes through formal and informal observations, learning walkthroughs, inter-visitations and collaborative teaching. The school's leaders have a clear idea of the particular professional development needs of the staff. Teachers provide greater input into their own professional development than ever before. One teacher said, "We are finally being treated as professionals with a valuable viewpoint." Teachers College staff developers have been at the school for several years. The school has served as a literacy model that other schools have visited. The new principal has adapted the California teaching standards for her school's use with teachers identifying their place along a continuum.

The administration is expanding the range of choices available to teachers for their professional development. This has resulted in a new enthusiasm for the craft of teaching and a deeper focus on student achievement. Several teachers have requested to move into other areas than those covered by Teachers College models. The principal has encouraged staff to request attendance at outside conferences and workshops that she readily approves. There is an emphasis on developing teachers as leaders and distributing leadership through the school community. This has led to a new volunteerism with which teachers willingly develop and share their areas of expertise with the whole school community.

The school guidance program is part-time and provides some support for the social development of the students in the school. The parents and students are united in requesting a much larger availability of after school programs and enrichment activities. There is also a parental concern about transition from the well-structured early childhood school to larger environment of the same high standard upon promotion. Parents would like to see more explicit character development education in this school. The principal has indicated an interest in working diligently to develop and sustain community based partnerships that would better serve the school community.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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 proficient.

The school's leaders effectively monitor the progress of students in each classroom, grade and subgroup at the end of each marking period. They are refining the process of developing interim, short-term goals across all core subjects. Teachers develop interim goals, but students cannot clearly articulate them as 'next steps' targets for learning. The school closely examines documents such as the Comprehensive Educational Plan, the State assessment data, past Quality Reviews and the Learning Environment Surveys to set new school-wide goals and evaluate achievement of previous goals. Teachers comment that there has been positive response to concerns expressed in the last learning environment survey. Teachers use their common planning time to analyze and make effective adjustments to their instructional practice.

Clearly defined rubrics result in accurate assessments of student work. Teachers routinely assess whether students are indeed meeting expectations. The Inquiry Team has tested intervention and teaching strategies that are research-based and teachers have implemented immediately to move student achievement. Struggling students have shown improvement in their reading levels at a faster pace than last year's group. The administration is working collaboratively to enhance the implementation of differentiated instruction across all core subjects. Staff, students and parents share the school's vision for continuous improvement. This has led to a tremendous willingness to work together and is leading to accomplishment of their academic goals.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: The Early Childhood Magnet School	△	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?			X	
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?			X	
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?			X	
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?				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 student’s learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?		X		
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			X	
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?			X	
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYQ, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.							
<i>To what extent do ...</i>	△	▷	✓	+			
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?				X			
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?			X				
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?			X				
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X				
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	△	▷	✓	+			
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?				X			
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?			X				
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?			X				
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X				
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent do...</i>	△	▷	✓	+			
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?			X				
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?			X				
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?			X				
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	▷	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed