

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**The Margaret P. Emery Elm Park School**

**31R021**

**168 Hooker Place  
Staten Island  
New York 10302**

**Principal: Gina Moreno**

**Dates of review: February 13 - 14, 2012**

**Lead Reviewer: Erminia Claudio**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Marge P. Emery Elm Park School is an elementary school with 453 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 25% Black, 59% Hispanic, 12% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 20% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 92.6%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal makes strategic organizational and instructional decisions that are aligned with the school's overarching goal of improved writing across the curriculum, resulting in increased student outcomes. (1.3)
  - The principal has used her budget to sustain a full time academic coach to facilitate professional development, model best practices, and support teachers in the alignment of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). The programming of nine preparation periods per week affords teachers the opportunity to meet regularly to analyze student work, capture trends, reflect on teacher practice, create challenging tasks and plan next steps for individual and targeted students as well as adjust curriculum maps to ensure rigor in the implementation of the (CCLS). An instructional team, inclusive of the school coach and the English as a second language teacher, meets weekly with the principal and several times a week as an instructional team to evaluate curricula in order to identify next steps and provide resources for grade level colleagues. This team has created a *Teacher Resource Binder* for math and literacy consisting of strategies, graphic organizers and other artifacts that align to the curriculum and have been deemed successful by teachers. An English as a second language teacher attends grade team meetings and is programmed to push into classrooms to support English language learners. As a result of the strategic use of resources, talent and time, writing across all classrooms has increased by at least one level as evidenced on the *Monthly Point Sheet* that is monitored each month by the school principal.
- Teachers and teams align assessments to curricula and check for understanding at the classroom level, gathering feedback on the effectiveness of curricula and instructional decisions and improving pedagogy. (2.2)
  - Teams of teachers and individual teachers create common pre-assessments in all core subject areas, analyze the data to inform instruction and create post-tests to monitor the effectiveness of teacher practice through student outcomes. The use of common rubrics allows students to self-reflect on their work, and informs teachers of progress towards achieving content mastery and individual student goals. The use of Acuity, predictive exams, running records, conference notes and Ed Performance data further informs instruction through identifying students' performance levels and trends. The use of an ongoing daily assessment checklist and a mid-workshop check for understanding, which is evident in all classrooms, supports teachers in making necessary adjustments to instruction and informs the planning of differentiated tasks needed to meet the demands of the CCLS. As a result, teachers plan effective lessons that are tiered, accommodating different entry points for all learners as reflected in the data logged for each class on the school created Monthly Point Sheet.

- The principal has created an environment that fosters positive professional growth and reflection through frequent and formative feedback that supports effective instructional practices. (4.1)
  - The principal provides consistent short cycles of frequent feedback to all teachers using a research based framework and conveys feedback through Teachscape, an online software tool. The feedback informs teachers of next steps for improvement, commends praiseworthy teacher practice, gives teacher feedback on mastery towards personal goals and guides the differentiated professional development teachers are offered. The online instructional planner that the school utilizes generates a report that enables the principal and the instructional team to identify gaps and weaknesses in instructional planning and tracks the fidelity of instruction and its alignment of the New York State standards with the Common Core Learning Standards. Consequently, classrooms are beginning to reflect the improvements in instructional practices through the feedback process and teachers state that the feedback that they receive from the principal is useful, supports next steps and has improved their pedagogy.
- The school engages families as partners in their children's education and is committed to maintaining a collaborative relationship with families, ensuring that they are informed and involved in the school life. (2.4)
  - The school has created valuable resources for parents that continuously keep them informed of their children's progress. These resources include: *A Monthly Progress Report* that encompasses both academic and social progress, a goal notebook that starts in kindergarten and remains with students through 5<sup>th</sup> grade, a *Report Card Goal Sheet* that updates progress towards meeting individualized goals, and the *Six Pillars of Character* student contract. As a result, parents voiced that they feel extremely supported by the school and believe that the school sets high expectations for their children. They value teacher willingness to communicate with them in a variety of ways to share pertinent information about their children as evidenced in the *Annual School Environmental Survey*.
  - The school provides training to families in the use of ARIS, and makes laptops available for families that otherwise would not have access to computers and the internet. The school's comprehensive website also serves as a valuable resource, providing important school documents, links to Acuity, ARIS, the Department of Education website, and Parent Teacher Association activities. Parents report that they use ARIS and the school website frequently, and these tools allow them to monitor and support student achievement at home.
- The school creates data driven goals and engages in progress monitoring at the school, team and classroom level, in partnership with students and parents, ensuring achievement of goals. (3.3)
  - All students in kindergarten through grade 5 have a *Goal Notebook* that contains individualized goals inclusive of the arts, technology and physical education. This notebook is passed from grade to grade enabling school leaders, individual teachers and teacher teams to have a clear understanding of student growth. Once a goal is mastered based a

review of student work, a new goal is generated. Consequently, students are aware of their goals, progress and what their next steps are and teachers can accurately assess the longitudinal growth of students from year to year. During the student meeting, several students talked about their goal book and said they felt proud when they mastered a goal and know they are going to receive another goal to work towards.

- The school has created grade specific *Monthly Progress Reports* that informs both students and parents of academic and social growth in all content area, inclusive of special education teacher support services (SETSS) and English as a second language. Accompanying the school's trimester report card, a *Report Card Goal Sheet* created by the school, indicates whether or not students met or did not meet specific goals. Consequently, the home/school connection is strong as a result of the meaningful and varied feedback that is being provided to them. Parents voiced that the *Monthly Progress Report* and the *Report Card Goal Sheet* are wonderful resources that supports them in understanding what their children are learning, the progress they are achieving, and enables them to support their children at home.
- The principal and her staff work as a unified team to create a welcoming, respectful and orderly environment that makes students feel supported and want to succeed. (1.4)
  - The principal and her staff know each student by name and address their academic, social and emotional needs in a nurturing environment. Clear expectations are set for students' academic and behavioral progress, evidenced in student learning goals and a positive behavior program entitled, *Character Counts*, allowing students' to earn points for six ethical values: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. When students exhibit these values they receive recognition during monthly assembles. The school created a student behavior contract that incorporates the *Character Counts* values and is given to each student at the beginning of the school year and sent home for parents to sign. A bulletin board located in the entrance way of the school highlights the *Character Counts* values and serves as a reminder to the entire school community what is expected of all PS 21 students. A student government that has representation from all grades meets weekly. At the student meeting it was shared that the student government meets to discuss things that will help the school be a better place. Two of the things that the students were most proud of are; a suggestion box for each class and bring your parents to school day. As a result of the school's effort to provide a comprehensive nurturing environment, students feel safe and feel they have a voice in the school.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Promote greater consistency in developing coherence and alignment in curricula and academic tasks across all subjects and grades so that all students are meaningfully engaged and challenged. 1.1
  - While the school has made great strides in providing students an expansive standards based curriculum and tasks, inclusive of the arts and

technology, and uses student work data to make adjustments to curricula to support diverse learners, this practice is not yet evidenced in a few classrooms and subject areas. In most classrooms, student work products reflect the rigor of the task. A newly instituted computer based writing program supports the school's goal of writing across content areas. The teachers monitor students' writing and provide guidance to support next steps. Although students revise their writing and expand their thinking through continuous feedback from the teacher, some of the tasks that high achieving students were engaged in however did not maximize their thinking to the full potential.

- Deepen teaching practice to further promote the school's work around questioning so that all learners are challenged to think critically. (1.2)
  - The school's belief that students learn best when they are given tasks that challenge their thinking is supported by the in-depth work the school is doing around Webb's Depth of Knowledge. In most classrooms visited, students were asked higher order thinking questions and had the opportunity to justify their answers and reflect on each other's thinking. However, a few of the classrooms only utilized yes and no questions which lead to general levels of student thinking.
- Ensure that protocols for collaborative inquiry are strategically used and deeply embedded in the school culture, guiding the norms of the professional collaborations to maximize consistency across all grades and teams. (4.2)
  - All teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work products during inquiry and grade team meetings. An in-depth understanding of the inquiry process supports improved teacher practice and collegial sharing of best practice. However, specific protocols and tools for various processes have yet to be codified. This hinders some teams in their ability to set norms, distribute work with specific next steps among teacher leaders and use time more efficiently in order to strategically drive improved teaching and learning practices at the school.
- Refine and strengthen differentiated professional development opportunities and support individual teacher goals and the school's overarching goals for improved teaching and learning outcomes. (4.3)
  - The school provides teachers with the opportunity to regularly participate in differentiated professional development that is purposeful and aligned to the school's goals. However, the next important focus in the school's professional development plans, strengthening the collegial intervisitations, is still in the planning stages. Although the principal and the instructional team are working towards systematizing the sharing of teacher practices through collegial intervisitations, not all teachers are fully involved in this practice, minimizing ability of some teachers to support each other as they deepen their knowledge.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

<b>School name:</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			<b>X</b>	
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?			<b>X</b>	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?				<b>X</b>
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				<b>X</b>
<b>Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			<b>X</b>	
2.2 Align assessments to curriculum, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?				<b>X</b>
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?				<b>X</b>
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students progress toward school and class expectations?				<b>X</b>
<b>Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?			<b>X</b>	
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?			<b>X</b>	
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?				<b>X</b>
3.4 Communicate high expectations to staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?				<b>X</b>

<b>Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?				<b>X</b>			
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			<b>X</b>				
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?			<b>X</b>				
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, guidance/advisement support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				<b>X</b>			
<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?			<b>X</b>				
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			<b>X</b>				
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?			<b>X</b>				
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			<b>X</b>				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>