



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Edward C. Blum**

**Elementary School K046**

**100 Clermont Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11205**

**Principal: Karyn Nicholson**

**Date of review: January 21, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Barbara Freeman**

## The School Context

Edward C. Blum is an elementary school with 417 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 49% Black, 47% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 89.9%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</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>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
---------------------------	---	----------------	-----------------------

### Findings

School leaders and teachers are engaged in structured professional inquiry collaborations that are focused on strengthening teacher capacity. The school supports, fosters and develops teachers to assume leadership roles.

### Impact

Professional collaborations have led to school-wide instructional coherence and increase student achievement. Teacher leadership plays a major role in school decision-making resulting in student progress.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet formally and informally to discuss grade curricula and student progress. Meetings occur three times per week to analyze student work, revise/ refine units of study, and analyze data to inform teaching practices. Through professional collaborations teachers have been able to design common core aligned units of study to support their magnet theme, *Communication and Media Arts through Applied Learning*, school-wide.
- School leaders along with teachers analyze trends and patterns of data across grades based on school goals and instructional focus. One interviewed teacher stated, “We eat and sleep this grade.” Teachers reiterated the importance of inquiry and teacher teams to the culture of the school. “It gives us the opportunity to plan lessons together, to challenge each other, and to work hard to prep students for the next grade. We are accountable”
- During the grade 2 team meeting, teachers discussed the results of the last administered Measure of Student Learning (MOSL) performance assessment. Through the use of the tuning protocol, teachers selected to review the work of students who performed lowest on the assessment. Decisions were made about flexible groups across the grade, additional re-teaching strategies, and assessment options to monitor student’s progress before the next common assessment.
- Teacher roles such as data specialists, magnet specialist, MOSL and professional learning teams provide the opportunity for teachers to take a leadership role in making decisions that affect professional development learning opportunities, curricular decisions and instructional practices. Teachers state school leaders are supportive of the necessary changes that need to be made to curricula and provides ample time with teachers to participate in inter-visitations, peer to peer conferencing and additional planning time to “attack the curriculum.”

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**2.2 Assessment**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

School leaders and teachers use common assessment data, student work samples, and student grades to measure student progress. Most teachers consistently use checks for understanding throughout lessons.

### Impact

School leaders and teachers provide feedback concerning student progress. While most teachers use ongoing checks for understanding, the practices not pervasive across the vast majority of classes, limiting the ability to meet all students learning needs.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school uses a range of assessments to monitor student progress based on MOSL selections. Grades utilize pre-, mid-, and post unit assessments and performance tasks and teachers create common assessments to support monitoring student achievement between school-wide assessments. Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) aligned rubrics are used to score student work and to make adjustments in instructional practices and lesson plans. Teachers use several sources and item banks to create assessments; however there is no formalized structure to monitor these resources, limiting teachers' ability to create the most rigorous assessments aligned to curricula.
- The grading system report student progress based on a leveling system from Level 1- 4. Inquiry teams discussions about student work and common assessment data has led teachers to rethink how students' work is graded and how information about student progress is conveyed to families and students. Teachers also aligning the leveling system to other reporting systems such as percent and letter grades creating a more standardized grading policy.
- During observed lessons teachers exhibited many forms of checking for understanding throughout lessons. Some examples are, thumbs up-thumbs down, "Can you repeat?" and share with your neighbor; however, formalized instructional practices were uneven from class to class limiting teachers' ability to determine the success of strategies aligned to curricula.
- In several classes, students use checklists and rubrics to self-assess their work. Students described using these tools to make sure they have included all elements in their writing pieces and coupled with teacher feedback gives them more information on the next steps in improving their work.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

### Findings

Curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and state standards. Curricula are supported with higher order thinking skills embedded in units of study.

### Impact

Students are exposed to demanding curricula that requires demonstration of higher order thinking skills and rigorous academic habits.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school adopted Pearson's *Ready Gen* and *Go Math* curriculum materials, which are common core aligned to support rigorous standards in English Language Arts (ELA) and math. For example, ELA materials address the instructional shifts of students being exposed to or informational and complex text. The school designs common core aligned units of study to support social studies, science, and magnet themes with an emphasis on academic and content rich vocabulary. State and city scope and sequence and trade books guide and support lessons that include culminating/celebration activities.
- In order to strengthening literacy coursework, the school has adopted additional writing units and writing across the content area in order to provide students with ample opportunities to demonstrate mastery in a number of writing genre.
- The school continues to deepen its work with Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) matrix order to stress higher order thinking skills such as critique, cite evidence, analyze, and apply concepts. Teachers' use of this alignment tool ensures that through lesson activities their multiple entry points to support Students with Disabilities (SWD's) and English Language Learners (ELL's).
- The school utilizes *Exemplars* in order to support math instruction and strengthen rigorous habits. *Exemplars* provide students with the opportunity to strengthen problem solving and reasoning skills through heavily scaffold support as they work through multi-step problems and explain their thinking process.

**Findings**

Most classrooms demonstrate instructional practices that are aligned to the CCLS, the Danielson Framework for Teaching (DfT) and the school's belief system. Students were engaged in discussions and high levels of thinking.

**Impact**

Teachers provide students with multiple opportunities to participate in rich student discussions that reflect participation, and thinking leading to students owning their learning.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The school believes students learn best by explicit instruction and hands on experiences. This was evident across classrooms visited. Teachers' engaged students in small group instruction, close, guided, and shared reading experiences, and the use of technology. The Danielson Framework for Teaching is utilized to describe the attributes of effective practice across 4 domains. With a focus on Domain 1, Planning and Preparation, clear expectations outlined on the development of units of study in lesson plans that reflect high levels of content and pedagogical knowledge supported the level of instruction observed in classrooms visited.
- Common pedagogical approaches and strategies prevalent in classrooms included were small groups based on data, mini lessons, whole group instruction, practice and reflection time, and turn and talk/ stop and jot. Students utilize conversation stems in order to further student discussions.
- In most observe classes, instructional practices balanced between teacher and student questioning allowing students more opportunities to pose questions to the teacher as well as their peers. For example, students in grade 2 had ample time to discuss their process for solving a math exemplar problem while other students in the group as clarifying questions, which resulted in several answers being corrected.
- Students in grades 2 and 3 completed social studies units that integrated most core content areas as well as arts integration. Throughout the unit teachers were responsible for selecting work samples to determine what they noticed about students and their work. Adjustments were made throughout the unit in order to determine skills students needed to demonstrate to produce standard-setting work as well as allowing students choice in the activities during the unit.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-----------------------

### Findings

School leaders consistently and strategically communicate high expectations supported by professional development to all staff based on the Danielson Framework for Teaching (DfT). School leaders and teachers work collaboratively with students and families, informing them frequently on student progress and next steps towards college and career readiness goals.

### Impact

The school has a culture of mutual responsibility and accountability amongst all stakeholders ensuring all students are prepared for next levels on the path of college and career.

### Supporting Evidence

- The principal states, “I utilize the learning principle *clear expectations* to consistently convey the expectations of teaching and learning to staff.” Expectations are displayed through memos, staff meetings, teacher team meetings, bulletin boards, and observation reports. School leaders model behaviors such as effective conferencing and feedback in order to demonstrate expectations that should be evident in classrooms. References are consistently made to the Danielson framework for teaching and the attributes that describe effective practice.
- The school’s professional development calendar reflects the support provided to teachers based on observation reports and one-to-one conferencing, which has led to strengthen the culture for learning, and built trust. The staff member state, “teachers feel responsible for their part in establishing classrooms where children are learning.”
- Teachers provide feedback to students and families frequently keeping them informed of student progress based on the expectations grade to grade and student work samples and class data through letters home, phone calls, and class newsletters. Parents have access to parent calendars, school website, and parent workshops. For example due to demand, parent workshops were offered to explain homework assignments that are based on common core aligned curricula, learning through the arts for SWD’s and ELL’s, and rigorous test taking.
- The school’s guidance counselor is instrumental in ensuring that students are matched to appropriate middle schools based on interest, learning styles, and performance. Parents are included and supported in making these decisions in order for students to be successful in middle school. According to the school’s recent snapshot 84% of former grade 5 students past their six great courses in math, English, social studies, and science.