



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

**Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning**

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**P.S. 90 The Edna Cohen School**

**Elementary School K090**

**2840 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11224**

**Principal: Greta Hawkins**

**Date of review: April 28, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Steven Chernigoff**

## The School Context

The Edna Cohen School is an elementary school with 667 students from pre-kindergarten through grade five. The school population comprises 13% Black, 58% Hispanic, 16% White, and 11% Asian students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 13.4% 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 91.6%.

## 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>Focus</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>Additional Findings</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>Celebration</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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

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

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations and provide training to the entire staff, who in turn communicate expectations of a path to college and career readiness to students and their families.

### Impact

High expectations result in a culture of mutual accountability and support student progress toward those expectations.

### Supporting Evidence

- The principal's weekly bulletin, *The Monday Message*, communicates high expectations to all staff regarding pedagogy, professional development and communication with parents. The principal regularly refers to the Danielson Framework for Teaching in *The Monday Message*, regarding good teaching practices that administrators observed the previous week that she wants to share and common practices that she feels need to be improved. She also communicates high expectations through verbal communication with teachers and staff both individually and in groups, and in written memos and emails. School leaders observe teachers on a regular basis and are currently on track to complete their scheduled observations well before the deadline. Teachers say that administrators provide relevant and actionable feedback, with a time-bound expectation for implementation. Even teachers who are rated Effective or Highly Effective for components of lessons receive substantive feedback to help them improve their practice. School leaders and staff developers provide an array of support to teachers rated Developing or Ineffective.
- The school's motto, posted throughout the school, is "The road to college starts here." Teachers prepare students for the next grade they enter and beyond. In professional development sessions, school leaders grouped teachers into vertical teams of kindergarten to grade 2 and grades 3 to 5 to look at the state exam questions for those grades and discuss ways they can prepare students both for their current grade and the next. The grade 5 team engaged in a cycle of inquiry on how to improve their ability to challenge students who are performing on grade level. They read an article on challenging gifted students and examined the grade 6 standards to think about how to improve one student's writing, and also to incorporate higher-level work and better prepare all their students for middle school.
- Parents feel school leaders and teachers do an excellent job communicating with them. They are always available to parents, in person, by phone or email, any time of the day. The third Friday of every month is Family Fridays. Families come in during the school day, visit classes and learn how to help their children. The school offers workshops and presentations for parents on the Common Core, state exams and new curricula that the school has adopted. Parents have access to Jupiter Grades, an electronic reporting system used by the school. Students feel challenged by the curriculum and report that adults always talk about college and career. Every year the school has a college fair to expose students further. The school's behavioral expectations are high as well, focusing on the six pillars of character (responsibility, choices, effort, respect, caring and honesty). Teachers focus on one of the traits each week during class discussions and assign "Hawkins Homework," named after the principal.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and incorporate the instructional shifts. Student work products and discussions reflect high levels of thinking and participation but there are missed opportunities for students to take ownership of their learning.

### Impact

Teaching practices engage students in higher order conversations but missed opportunities limit students' abilities to accelerate their learning beyond the teacher's pre-planned activities.

### Supporting Evidence

- A grade 3 class was studying China in a social studies lesson aligned to the New York City Department of Education's (NYC DOE) scope and sequence. The students rotated among five different stations around the classroom. They took notes and wrote on chart paper regarding what they noticed about the photo, map or artwork and what they wondered about the display at each station as they discussed their ideas. A grade 2 class studying Ancient Greece was engaged in a lesson on the Battle of Marathon, from the Core Knowledge curriculum. The students read different texts and wrote answers to a variety of questions and prompts, while the teacher took notes and assessed their understanding verbally.
- During a literacy in science extension lesson for the top grade 5 class, students imagined themselves doing on-site research about different animals in their natural habitat and keeping a field journal, according to the Expeditionary Learning curriculum. The teacher distributed photographs of animals to various student groups and a field journal page, as well as a fact sheet about the group's animal. Students studied the photograph and drew the scene in their field journal. They then wrote three things they noticed about the animal from the photo and three facts about the animal from the fact sheet. However, the lesson did not provide opportunities for students to discuss their findings or do their own research about the animal on the internet to expand on their own learning, as they were limited to completing the prepared fact sheet. The lesson did not require students to write extended response answers beyond copying from a bulleted sheet.
- In a grade 2 math lesson, the teacher consistently asked the students "to construct a viable strategy to solve 3-digit and 2-digit variables." Students had to use math terminology to state their answer in a complete sentence, both in writing and orally when called upon. The teacher went to many students individually to assess their learning. Students with their hands raised waited a long time, as much as ten minutes, before the teacher came to hear their answers and the teacher did not provide any other instructions for the students to do another activity or discuss their answers with each other, thus limiting opportunities for further learning.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills.

### Impact

The curricula build coherence and promote college and career readiness skills for all students across all grades and subjects, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers purposefully changed the literacy curricula to Core Knowledge in kindergarten and grade 2, supplemented by Foundations; Expeditionary learning is used in grades 3-5. The previous curriculum did not meet students' needs and lacked sufficient rigor. The new curricula are richer in content area readings and better aligned to the Common Core. Teachers realigned English language arts (ELA) curriculum maps and they now correspond more closely to the science and social studies scope and sequences as well. In math, the school uses EngageNY modules for kindergarten to grade 5.
- Based on student data, teachers supplement the curricula with read alouds, vocabulary sheets, summary sheets and re-work lesson plans to chunk material so that students have access to it. Teachers provide ELLs and students with disabilities with visual supports, re-written texts for better access and additional vocabulary sheets with pictures for content area words. They give students with disabilities student-specific "cheat sheets" with precise steps to complete each task, based on the supports the child needs as identified in his/her Individualized Education Program (IEP). The "cheat sheet" has both written and pictorial instructions, as needed. In math, teachers have added lessons to review skills prior to the new lesson to be taught, based on student data.
- School leaders insist that all lessons incorporate higher-order thinking questions using Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels 3 and 4. Teachers work together to adjust their lessons across each grade to accomplish this. Administrators have teachers work in vertical teams to review their lessons, promote higher-order thinking questions and build coherence from grade to grade.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. The school also uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals.

### **Impact**

The school's assessment practices provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement and teachers use the data to adjust curricula and instruction.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- The school administers weekly assessments in ELA and math to assess student learning and determine next steps. These assessments are from Schoolnet, from prior New York State grade 3 to 5 exams and teacher made. The school administers the Diagnostic Reading Assessment (DRA) three times each year.
- In class, teachers utilize running records in all grades to measure student fluency in reading. A teacher of a grade 2 class listened to students and recorded his assessment of their reading as the class worked on a unit about Ancient Greece. In grade 2 and grade 5 math classes, the teachers had students fill out an exit ticket, while in other classes teachers utilized thumbs up/down to assess quickly which students understood the material.
- Grading of student work posted and observed in notebooks utilized a rubric and teachers responded with "Glows and Grows". Glows were substantive in identifying what students did well but Grows focused on mechanical issues in the writing and only sometimes addressed more substantive content weaknesses. Posted work also included evidence of peer feedback and self-assessment practices.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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**Findings**

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations. Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work.

**Impact**

Professional collaborations promote the achievement of school goals, the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and improve teacher practice and student achievement.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Horizontal, grade-level teacher teams meet regularly on Tuesday afternoons for the second half of the 75-minute additional work time, and one period per week during common planning time during the school day. Vertical teams meet once a month and as needed to examine standards-based work so that teachers will know how to prepare students for the next level of their education.
- The grade 5 team was in an inquiry cycle of looking at higher achieving (high level 2 and 3) students in order to improve their writing. For one student, the team suggested having her write an outline to organize her thoughts better before writing the actual essay. They decided to provide her with an exemplar outline or two from which to choose. The team also thought of ways to have her go beyond simply analyzing an article distributed to the class, such as having her conduct her own research on the internet and interview two teachers or other adults about the topic. The team will bring the student’s next draft the following week to analyze her improvement and see whether they would use this strategy with additional students.
- Another team had previously done inquiry on the bottom-third performing Hispanic girls to determine what strategies would be beneficial for them. They worked on helping these students support the main idea in a piece of writing with two supporting details. All students in the inquiry group improved their ability to use details to support the main idea of an informative essay. All teachers on that grade now use the strategies the team utilized to improve their students’ writing.