



Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Ella Baker

Elementary School M225

**317 East 67th Street
Manhattan
NY 10065**

Principal: Laura Garcia

**Date of review: April 2, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Sandra Litrico**

The School Context

Ella Baker is an elementary school with 319 students from kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 29% Black, 47% Hispanic, 17% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 92.0%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
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	Additional Findings	Well Developed
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	Celebration	Well Developed
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	Focus	Well Developed
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Additional Findings	Well Developed
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Additional Findings	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Teacher pedagogy promotes the ideas of multiple entry points and student engagement. Every classroom demonstrated meaningful ways in which all students could access complex ideas or concepts and engage in high-level questioning and student-to-student discussion.

Impact

Teaching strategies are aligned to the instructional shifts and promote college and career readiness skills. Learners are actively engaged in multiple learning opportunities that incorporate higher order thinking skills and high-level discussions.

Supporting Evidence

- The school is committed to a child-centered experience based curriculum where children devote time to the exploration of ideas by using materials and developing extensive projects. This was evident in all classroom visits. Students work collaboratively on projects that meet their interests, needs, and learning styles. All students are engaged in high-level tasks and discussions.
- In the seventh/eighth grade humanities class students engaged in a "Socratic circle" on the great depression. The students had viewed the video "Riding the Rails", researched online websites, and read articles and text to broaden their understanding of this time period. They referenced this information to support their claims. Students asked each other questions that promoted deep discussion and pushed each other's thinking building and commenting on each other's thoughts. The students in the outer circle were assessing the inner circle students using a rubric/checklist. The teacher facilitated as students took ownership of their own learning.
- Teachers work with each student for two years in multi-age classrooms to provide continuity of experience. During "work time" students had the opportunity to make choices about their work. Teachers plan curriculum with questions that access important ideas and concepts. They use Habits of Mind to ensure that students think deeply about their work
- The use of SMART board technology, project based assessments, literacy workshops, differentiated text materials, peer feedback, multi-level groupings, real world application, direct small group instruction, and inquiry-based units of study, assist in providing entry points for diverse learners.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

School leaders and staff align assessments to curricular, use on-going assessments and grading practices to analyze data on student learning outcomes, and make instructional adjustments at the team and classroom levels. Teachers use on-going checks for understanding to inform them of next instructional practices. Indicators

Impact

The school's use of common assessments, data analysis, descriptive reviews of individual students, and feedback, allows teachers to make thoughtful instructional adjustments at the classroom and school level that meet students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's assessment practices that are based on the work of the Prospect School and Center and the Prospect Descriptive Processes developed by Patricia F. Carni and others guides observation and documentation of students and their work. Teachers formally use the Primary Language Record three times a year, as well as they write observational records, use running records, and write extensive narratives describing students' growth and development. A close read of these reviews indicate teachers deep understanding of student's strengths, areas of growth, and next steps. The review also includes detailed description of the student's social emotional growth and interests. This information is used to ensure each student's needs are being met and that individualized academic plans are developed.
- A review of teachers' conference notes and checklists indicated that formative assessments lead to instructional adjustments, such as regrouping students and re-teaching concepts. Teachers also develop tasks and projects that are aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards as well as student goals and objectives based on this data.
- Across classrooms, teachers used peer feedback checklists, exit slips, and student self-assessment checklists and rubrics specific to the tasks, to adjust lessons. Teacher's observations of students at work and review of individual work assist in identifying trends in the classroom. Teachers said they focus on what students can do and build upon their strengths to support learning.
- A variety of assessment tools are used to create clear portraits of students' strengths and challenges that supports the processes of individualizing instruction to meet student needs. However, the school did not fully focus on refining school-wide assessment practices to include the development of plans that outline specific next steps and strategies for teaching each child.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

The school has a rigorous and clearly articulated approach to interdisciplinary curriculum design that is aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and incorporates the instructional shifts.

Impact

All students have a range of opportunities to both build skill as well as dig deeply into important topics. The curricula ensure that students are engaged in challenging tasks that require them to think, reflect, and problem solve.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers reflect on the year looking at assessment data and begin the process of developing and refining ideas to revise curriculum during their annual retreat in June and throughout the summer. Grade level cohort teams analyze student work and meet weekly throughout the year to further adjust and develop multidisciplinary curriculum units, connecting big ideas in social studies and science to reading and writing units.
- The school developed a curriculum map template that facilitates school wide planning. Unit plans are developed by starting from the task and planning backward. The curriculum map frames the essential questions and the Common Core Learning Standards that are incorporated in each inquiry. Unit studies are developed, outlining what students will work on and how they will show a deep understanding of the content. All units ask students to think deeply, take a position, research, and listen to others, as they ask questions and participate in Socratic seminars.
- The school utilizes The Habits of Mind Program to ensure students think critically about their work and promote an exchange of ideas in the classroom. Students present and peer review their inquiries to strengthen their defense of their position with research and/or text based evidence.
- In math teachers use the resources provided by Math in the City, Exemplars, teacher generated problems and Engage NY. All of these resources reinforce the use of a variety of math real world contexts, strategies, and proofs, to ensure higher order thinking and provide deep conceptual understanding and multiple avenues for access.
- All curriculum units engage students in solving real world and math problems. The kindergarten to grade 1 civil rights curriculum teaches students to think about themselves and other people. It asks them to make sure that everyone has a voice, there is fairness, equality, and safety, when developing a community. Another unit reviewed was a grade seven/eight unit on cosmic math. The student understanding and essential questions were "How do we use mathematics to help us comprehend the cosmos?" "How do we represent values, sizes, and relationships of and between planets and moons."

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school's deeply embedded, holistic approach to supporting students and its commitment to perpetuating a democratic community results in a high degree of efficacy among students and staff. The staff is committed to rigorous instruction as well as high expectations for all students

Impact

There is a highly supportive learning environment where school leaders communicate high expectations for professional learning and parent involvement leading to a path for college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal said that “The mission of educating each child requires high expectations of ourselves and everyone in the community”. As a result, teachers develop individual goals to further develop their professional practice. Teachers are expected to plan for all students in their classrooms, use assessments to guide their understanding, and create inquiries and project based curriculum using relevant resources.
- The school communicates a strong learning environment that values and encourages student voice, choice, creativity, and critical thinking. Students are expected to do their best work and collaborate with their peers. Students are given the support that scaffolds independent and group tasks. Students develop their voice and have choice in their work. They present their chosen work at parent conferences to facilitate ownership of learning and self-reflection.
- Students are expected to come to school every day on time and ready to learn. Students in middle school grades are members of an advisory in which they discuss attending high school and college and important issues relevant to this transitional age. The guidance counselor helps students and parents in this process.
- Parents receive family weekly letters and regular updates about their children’s learning, curriculum, and school events.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in professional collaborations and they participate in grade level team meetings to ensure curriculum coherence. Teachers use protocols to analyze classroom practice, assessment data and student work with a focus on accelerating the learning of all students.

Impact

The work of shared leadership and teacher teams has fostered meaningful teacher collaborations resulting in improvement in curricular coherence, teacher pedagogy, and student learning outcomes.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal and staff value time for staff to meet and look closely at the cycle of teaching and learning. The staff have many opportunities to share and develop ideas and teaching practices. They meet twice weekly as an entire staff for professional development. The principal messages that the work of teacher teams is integral to the achievement of students and to the cohesiveness of instruction across grades. Principal's observation data has shown an increase in teachers rated effective and highly effective in questioning and discussion.
- The school under the School Based Option has chosen to extend the school day in order to designate one-half day per month to further their work in student descriptive review process. Teams look at individual student data and write an in-depth analysis of student's strengths and areas for improvement. These reviews are used to group students, provide extensions and supports when needed.
- Teachers meet in cohort teams and collaborate to develop curriculum units. Teacher teams look closely at student work and focus on how to support the student. Cohorts meet to discuss alignment of lessons, individual students, share pedagogical ideas, assess student work, share effective practices, and plan modified lessons that meet Individual student's needs. They use protocols to ensure that they stay focused on the work. Teacher teams have developed units that engage students in research, inquiry, and real life experiences. The project-based units are continually refined to meet the needs of all students as well as their interests to ensure students are actively engaged in learning.
- The grade 2/3 teacher team focused on writing and they developed their own curriculum, which includes on demand writing, stop-and-jots, and note taking to further develop students' skills. They also use this time to share ideas and teaching strategies. This has resulted in gains in student reading levels as noted by running record data and performance based assessments in English language arts.