



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

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**Earth School**

**01M364**

**600 East 6 Street  
Manhattan  
NY, 10009**

**Principal: Abbe Futterman**

**Date of review: March 3, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Safiyah Satterwhite**

## The School Context

Earth School is an elementary school with 321 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 14% Black, 35% Hispanic, 38% White, 7% Asian students, and 6% Multi-Racial. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 94.00%.

## 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>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</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>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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>

## Area of Celebration

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Well Developed**

### Findings

The school provides a rigorous curriculum that coherently embeds high-level tasks and activities. School curricula are planned and refined using student work data.

### Impact

Curricula challenge students to consistently demonstrate their thinking across grades and subjects, leading to high levels of cognitive engagement.

### Supporting Evidence

- Rooted in a constructivist belief and founded by teachers, the Earth School's instructional staff, in collaboration with parents and the community, create a curriculum that is backwards-planned, infused with a project-based approach, values choice and is personalized for learners. For example, kindergarten classes participated in an interdisciplinary unit on superheroes based on student interests.
- Unit plans encompass essential questions, big ideas, unit goals, Common Core Learning Standards alignment, differentiation and assessments. Differentiation in one Kindergarten class for example stated "Students will have a choice of paper where writing lines differ (in quantity and size). Students who can write more will work on paper with more lines, students who struggle with writing will use paper with only 2 lines and larger spaces". Multiple entry points are also planned for students with support language in the unit plan and directions to the teacher such as "modify language in problem set", or "reword for readability".
- Research-based programs such as Wilson, Fountas and Pinnell, Context For Learning, Investigations and resources from Engage New York are used as resources for teachers and material is then customized for each individual learner in the class. An in depth mathematics and reading learning continuum has been created by teachers to ensure that the school and families can work together to monitor student progress and to pace student learning.
- Teachers College leveled reading bands are administered to all students and change frequently to meet the needs of learners. These reading bands help teachers to handpick books aligned to each specific student's reading letter (J-T) to ensure that both the highest, lowest, English language and students with disabilities have access to quality reading materials and are cognitively engaged.
- Using graphic organizers, scaffolds and other supportive resources, teachers provide students with multiple opportunities to demonstrate their thinking. One unit plan, for example, asks students to demonstrate their learning through a book project on the deciduous forest. Another lesson asks students to explain their thinking in solving a mathematics problem with their peers at their table. Open ended activities that allow students the freedom to demonstrate thinking in an individualized way supports the school's beliefs about how students learn best.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

Teaching practices embed scaffolds, supports and multiple entry points consistently across classrooms to promote high levels of student thinking and participation.

### Impact

As these practices are becoming more prominent at the school, high levels of ownership and strategic supports were not yet evident in the vast majority of classrooms.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms teachers provided standard supports to students that included mostly graphic organizers. For example in one classroom a hamburger graphic organizer was used to review the parts of a paragraph, in another a character map graphic organizer was used. Although graphic organizers and reference sheets successfully aid students in gaining access to the curriculum; strategic varied high quality supports and extensions in teacher practice in the vast majority of classrooms for English language learners, students with disabilities and high achievers are in progress.
- Across classrooms students were engaged in conversations with their peers and work products reflected high levels of thinking. In one classroom, students used mathematics manipulatives to make a combination of 10; in another, students read independently in their reading groups. However, in some classes, there were few opportunities that allowed students to select their learning activity or lead their peers in learning resulting in few observations of student ownership in lessons.
- Teacher questioning has been a focus of the school and teachers have strengthened the quality of their questioning as a result of professional development however in some classes the level of rigorous questioning posed was not as strategic as in others resulting in fewer opportunities for some students to receive high quality supports.

## Additional Findings

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

The school administers common assessments that are aligned to the curricula and determine student progress towards goals.

### Impact

Results from assessments are used to adjust curricula and instruction and provide actionable feedback to teachers regarding student achievement.

### Supporting Evidence

- Cumulative portfolios are kept for each child at the Earth School. These large envelopes contain work from each year the child attends. Students and their teachers select work to place in the portfolio. Reviewing work over several years allows teachers to look at how learning is taking place for that student. Prior to graduation, each student is assigned an adult mentor with whom to go through the work and select pieces to exhibit during the final weeks of school. The portfolios are stored in each classroom and are available for viewing by parents upon request.
- Teachers assess children's literacy and mathematics skills using a variety of tools and techniques, such as running records, sound-letter surveys, unit assessments, quizzes, and classroom observations. These ongoing records inform daily decisions and are communicated to families during conferences and in written reports in January and June. Teachers use Teachers College running records to group students into guided reading groups and an on-demand writing pre-assessments to develop lessons and plan for intervention groups. In addition, teachers review mathematics classwork and exit slips in order to modify the next day's lesson based on student needs. For example, across classrooms students were grouped both heterogeneously and homogeneously where appropriate to support student learning as a result of assessments provided on an ongoing basis. Individual notes were kept per child such as "fluent oral reader" or "works hard to decode" to ensure that instructional practices supported the learning of each and every student.
- Each student receives a Narrative Report in January and June. Based on data collected by the teacher, these reports document each child's development, interests, and progress in school subject areas. To prepare for writing, teachers spend time reviewing the student's work and written observations and records. They synthesize this data in detailed summaries. Individualized goals are created for each child to prioritize their next steps. Narrative reports serve as a central communication device for the formative and summative assessment data gathered throughout the school year. For example, one parent in response to a narrative report wrote back to the instructor "We loved the detail and generosity of the report. It felt like (the teacher) really has considered our son and knows him. It also confirms things that we felt at home and helped articulate a couple of challenges for (our son) as he grows. I had been a bit nervous about his learning to read, but now are seeing that he has a big vocabulary in conversation and enjoys being read to, so we are both calmer about that, which is something the teacher helped us to understand".

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

School leaders and staff have effectively communicated a path to college and career readiness and established a unified culture of high expectations tied to a path for college and career readiness in which families and students are active participants.

### Impact

Parents serve as partners in the school community and work in conjunction with teachers to ensure that students own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- Parent interviews echo the personalized support that they receive from the school. Parents are provided opportunities to work together with the school to develop the curriculum and the Annual Town Meeting is a time where both students and parents can explore questions such as “What kinds of curriculum and programming allow us to know children more fully? What kinds of curriculum and programming prevent us from seeing children in rich and full ways?”
- Parents of students with disabilities, at risk students, general education, and high achieving students in the parent meeting additionally spoke to level of detail and support they receive from teachers in successfully preparing students for the next level through the narrative reports. According to the school narrative reports describe the whole child and address learning goals and progress, social/emotional development, work habits, entry points to the work, and individual interests. The reports are an opportunity to look both at a child’s progress on a learning continuum regardless of grade level expectation and how a child is doing with regards to the Common Core. For a student with disabilities, their IEP goals are taken into consideration and progress towards their individual goals is communicated in the narrative report as well. While individual units or project information is shared with students and their families in an ongoing manner, the narrative shows the entire picture of how a student is performing in all areas. Subsequent conferences refer to the goals expressed in the narratives. The narrative document then becomes central to the discussion.
- Four of the schools staff members, including the guidance counselor, attended a training institute to implement the Parent Corps program. The fourteen-week program is designed to promote positive parenting skills and create an ongoing support group for parents. The neurological research-based program is designed to decrease childhood stress in order to improve academic achievement. Parents actively participate for free in this program.
- Teacher teams meet frequently to both review and norm the feedback provided to parents through the narrative report and other documents to ensure that it is aligned to their expectations, is clear and focused and effectively provides students and parents with the information they need to support students in reaching the next level.

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

Teachers systematically work together in various roles and capacities, including inquiry-based collaborations, to positively impact student learning school-wide.

**Impact**

These systems result in teachers having a very clear voice in decision-making and support student mastery of goals.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teacher teams regularly collect and share data such as, but not limited to, baseline mathematics assessments, on-demand writing assignments, Words Their Way baseline assessments, Student Independent Reading Levels and descriptive anecdotal evidence which drives teacher instruction. Careful consideration of the Common Core with regards to instruction and student learning supports teachers in curriculum planning. Grade level teams share resources and best practices along and between grade levels. Time is spent reflecting on teaching practice, with opportunities to observe other teachers and reflect together on shifts in practice.
- Teachers collaborate during weekly staff meetings, grade team meetings, summer retreats, and conferences. Through the PROSE partnership, teachers are more formally encouraged to focus attention on collecting and reviewing a variety of data and student work to guide instruction and refine practice. The PROSE Inquiry Cycle that each teacher completes includes carefully collecting data and student work from a sampling of students, reviewing data/work with colleagues, aligning data to applicable standards, generating recommendations for refining practice, and implementing changes. For example teachers have inquiry questions that they gather evidence to support such as “How can I better use questioning and discussion to further reading development?” or “How can I find a balance between independent reading, guided reading and read alouds?”
- Student progress is tracked and shared for individual students during the teacher team meetings. Teachers set goals for students and share out individual progress. As goals are obtained, new goals for students are set.
- In addition to the School Leadership Team, the school has a system of distributing leadership throughout the staff to ensure ownership and voice for innovative ideas. This includes a Professional Development Committee that plans for and implements PD for the staff, a Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Committee that assesses needs and supports the staff in implementing RULER and other SEL curricula, and a PROSE Committee that regularly assesses the implementation of PROSE initiatives and supports staff in planning and recording of PROSE-related work.