



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**East Elmhurst Community School**

**Elementary School Q329**

**26-25 97<sup>th</sup> Street  
Queens  
NY 11369**

**Principal: Rachel Staroba-Hallenbeck**

**Date of review: May 11, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Philip A. Composto**

## The School Context

East Elmhurst Community is an elementary school with 154 students from grade kindergarten through first grade. The school population comprises 8% Black, 84% Hispanic, 4% White, 3% Asian and 1% other students. The student body includes 55% English language learners and 6% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 93.1%

## 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>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>Well Developed</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

The principal consistently communicates high expectations to the entire school community including teachers, students and families that led to a culture of mutual accountability for these expectations. The school fosters positive partnerships with families and engages them in supporting their child's progress.

### Impact

Frequent communication with families enhances their understanding of the high expectations and student progress towards those expectations to actively support their children's learning. Detailed feedback to students that addresses their physical, social, emotional and academic learning needs helps students prepare towards college and career readiness.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school leadership team (SLT) meets monthly to address and revise curricula initiatives and analyze student data that results from the instructional program. At the SLT meetings, discussions include reading levels, rubrics and effective next steps for student progress for all learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities.
- School leaders believe that children with informed families who advocate for the best education for their child tend to experience greater academic success to support families. The school effectively uses multiple modalities to reach, inform and interact with families. For example, most families have downloaded the P.S. 329Q school App to receive updates on all school activities and to access the quick view of the school's website. In addition, they receive a monthly newsletter highlighting the students of the month, current activities and also include student created articles.
- The principal meets weekly with the grade leaders to plan social-emotional activities that embed college and career readiness skills. For example, community members were invited to share their work experiences with the students.
- *Learning in School Together* is a group of current students' mothers and their younger children that meets twice weekly. This group was created from the observations and conversations with grade one families who stated, had they fully understood the expectations of kindergarten, they would have done more to prepare their young children before arriving at school. This class is conducted by the principal and parent coordinator to teach the alphabet, early number and counting skills, socialization and plan. This has also resulted in families forming a network of parents with young children who support and depend upon one another.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**2.2 Assessment**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

Teachers use common assessments, rubrics and grading policies aligned to the school's curricula to gain a clear understanding of student progress toward goals. However, within lessons, there were missed opportunities to assess students.

### Impact

Teachers make effective adjustments to curriculum at the teacher team and classroom levels to ensure all students make progress toward meeting their goals. Formative assessments within lessons allow teachers to provide feedback and/or make instructional adjustments.

### Supporting Evidence

- Each unit of study in writing begins with a rubric that teachers align to the Common Core Learning Standards. This rubric is presented and explained to children at the introduction of the unit. The rubric elements are what drive the establishment of the teaching points and small group strategy lessons for the duration of the unit. The unit ends with a performance based assessment published piece rated both by the student and teacher using the initial rubric.
- Across the school, running records are used as a school wide measure to determine progress towards students' goals. The school uses the benchmarks aligned to the common core established by the Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project. Running records are conducted three times a year and results are analyzed by grade level teachers to group students and determine next steps for each group of readers to move them to the next level. Teachers also confer with readers in their small groups a minimum of once a week to monitor progress.
- Both grades K and 1 use math inventories and performance based assessments with common rubrics to assess student progress and to adjust instruction. In some classrooms, student worked independently while teachers provided support to small target groups. Teachers in several classrooms did not circulate to students as they worked independently. This resulted in missed opportunities to provide actionable feedback to students or teachers to make immediate instructional adjustments.

## Additional Findings

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

The school aligns curricula to Common Core Learning Standards and offers students rich instructional programs that emphasize rigor and higher order thinking skills across grades and subject areas for a variety of learners.

### Impact

Curricula decisions build coherence across grades. Students are provided with a rich instructional program and activities/tasks that emphasize rigor and skills that promote college and career readiness for all students, including English language learners (ELLs) and Students with disabilities (SWDs).

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders put structures in place to facilitate the full implementation of a comprehensive common core aligned balanced literacy instructional program. Consequently, a focal point of this implementation has been the inclusion of both fiction and non-fiction units of study, building in ample time for independent and small group work. As a result, teachers have created pacing calendars and units of study using the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) template to address the needs of all learners.
- Common Core aligned units of study that integrate the instructional shifts, created from combining Math in the City, TERC Investigations and teacher created materials. This includes a multi-faceted approach that balances student rehearsal through homogeneous partnerships, dialogue through math congress and number talks. Whole group lessons for grade level content, and small group strategy lessons are used differentiate and provide multiple entry points that address the needs of all learners including English language learners and students with disabilities. For example, one kindergarten teacher's lesson plans reflect three different groupings; one using colored bears to subtract, another using unifix cubes to add, another group added and subtracted without manipulatives.
- The arts and social studies teachers have collaborated to create a cohesive and comprehensive arts and social studies program that supports the literacy units of study and provides children with strong foundational skills that connect to the NYC Blueprint for the Arts and the Social studies Scope and Sequence. Teachers provide a Town Hall program for children on Friday mornings that furthers the connections between the two disciplines. For example, teachers teach patriotic songs such as, America the Beautiful. In addition, each grade shares their lyric study song. On grade's lyric song was "If I had a Hammer" to review vocabulary with students.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

The school's instructional policy is aligned to the curricula and the Danielson's Framework for Teaching. Teacher's questioning and discussion techniques and the school-wide use of various engagement strategies students' thinking are consistently reflected in meaningful student work products.

### **Impact**

Across all grades, teaching practices reflect challenging learning tasks that engage students. Teaching strategies regularly provide multiple entry points to positively involve English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWD) in meaningful tasks.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- The school leader has made an ongoing effort to align teaching practice to meet with the curricula objectives as set forth by Teachers College Reading and Writing Project in using modeling, shared practice and independent practice for the balanced literacy program to meet the Common Core learning standards. This structure was observed in most classrooms visited.
- During kindergarten center time, students were rotating through stations that provided various scaffolds, such as teacher modeling, visuals and graphics and hands-on learning. The teachers also provided small group instruction consistently providing multiple entry points so that all students are engaged in challenging tasks.
- Across classrooms, students' conversations included responses to teacher-generated questions, as well as Higher Order Thinking (HOT) questions that allowed students to support their thinking using text-based evidence. For example, students in a first grade classroom created writing pieces that required students to grab the reader's attention on a topic, state an opinion, include an example and support that opinion with evidence.
- Multiple designs of academic tasks with numerous scaffolds and entry points for all learners were observed during classroom visits. For example, during a math lesson, students had access to visual aids and other assorted manipulatives such as counters, cubes and abaci to complete their tasks.

<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

Teacher teams systemically analyze key elements of student work and engage in on-going curriculum refinements and alignments. Distributive leadership structures are embedded to support effective teacher leadership opportunities.

### Impact

Professional collaborations on teams, the refinement and alignment of curriculum and distributive leadership opportunities for teachers has resulted in shared accountability for student success and coherence across the school.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders have embedded several teacher team structures that promote the implementation of the common core and the instructional shifts. These structures include weekly grade-level team meetings during an additional professional period, plus two or more common prep periods per grade, per week. Additionally, teachers work with several professional development partners and the network achievement coach to receive support regarding instructional and curricular initiatives.
- Grade level teacher teams meet weekly to systematically align and adjust core curriculum implementation including progression of units, development of task exemplars and looking at student work to adjust unit plans and pacing calendars. Furthermore, as a new school that is still writing and refining their instructional program, teachers review the success and struggles of the lessons delivered and make adjustments for the subsequent year. Teachers make decisions on how to re-address topics that students were not able to grasp. The impact of this work has resulted in horizontal alignment of instructional practices from class to class on both grades currently in the school.
- Monday's professional development block is utilized to support vertical alignment across the two grades. Topics are driven by the school's Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) goals, principal observations of teacher practice, and recommendations from grade leaders. In addition, as a new school with several new teachers, the time is also used to calibrate practices, norm expectations, establish cohesive pedagogy and launch new instructional initiatives.
- Distributive leadership structures are embedded across the school which allows for effective teacher input. The kindergarten, grade one and arts/social studies team leaders form the instructional "cabinet" and serve as the decision making body around curricular and instructional decisions. The principal meets regularly with each of the three team leaders to roll over new initiatives and glean feedback on the effectiveness of the school's instructional program. The principal stated, "Team members have come to look to their team leaders for direction, feedback and support."