



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

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**Edgar Allan Poe**

**Elementary School X046**

**279 East 196 Street  
Bronx  
NY 10458**

**Principal: Jennifer Alexander Ade**

**Date of review: March 3, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Matthew Angell**

## The School Context

Edgar Allan Poe is an elementary school with 1,237 students from grade kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 16% Black, 79% Hispanic, 2% White, 2% Asian students, and 1% Pacific Islander. The student body includes 41% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 91.9%.

## 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>Developing</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>Proficient</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>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

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

Teachers engage in structured, inquiry based, professional collaborations focused on implementing Common Core Learning Standards and increasing student achievement. Teachers have a voice in curricular and instructional practices through the distributed leadership structures that are in place.

### Impact

Teacher collaboration through regular analysis of data and student work results in strengthened instructional capacity of teachers and provides opportunities for shared leadership that positively affects learning throughout the school community. .

### Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams regularly review student work and data to assess the progress of students and determine next steps towards meeting student goals through cycles of inquiry. A 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher team was observed reviewing student work, using a protocol connected to improving student achievement in writing. They examined a piece of student work, representing a student within their focus group, in pairs and then shared out findings. After recording low inference observations about the student work, teachers shared best practices to assist the student in meeting his goal.
- Teacher team time is divided into curriculum meetings and inquiry meetings at the request of the teachers. Teachers state that this structure gives them more time to work on curriculum revisions, focus on inquiry work and expand development of instructional supports. For instance, teachers have included instructional supports for English language learners, such as language stems, within unit tasks based on teacher observation and student data.
- A review of teacher team SMART goals and student work products demonstrate progress for groups of students and improved teacher practice through the collaboration on strategies connected to Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams track student progress, using school created templates, through the inquiry cycle. School leaders monitor team goals and give team feedback, verbally and in writing, to ensure all inquiry is connected to Common Core Learning Standards and the school wide focus on rigorous instruction. For instance, the 1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher team is focused on a group of students struggling with word decoding and phonemes. Students receive instructional interventions and over 50% of students within the group have already met their goals. The team has modified supports for students who have not yet met their goal.
- School leaders and grade team leaders create professional development opportunities for teachers connected to teacher observation, student data, school wide goals, and teacher input. Teachers identified by school leaders lead professional development sessions on “Menu Mondays.” Teachers choose the professional development that aligns with their needs. One result of the increased teacher input has been a shared focus on academic vocabulary.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**2.2 Assessment**

**Rating:**

**Developing**

### Findings

Across classrooms teachers use assessments that are often loosely aligned to the curriculum, or lesson objective. Teachers' assessment practices are inconsistent in the use of checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

### Impact

Although teachers use assessments to guide their lessons, many pieces of student work lack feedback or the feedback written is not actionable for the student or the teacher. Teachers are inconsistent in making effective adjustments to meet students' learning needs and guide students to the next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers circulate the room during group work, and ask check for understanding questions during discussions. Although In one 3<sup>rd</sup> grade English language arts classroom the teacher carried a conference notebook and recorded findings during student conversations the practice of recording student's strengths or areas that need improvement is not seen as a school wide practice.
- Student work folders across classrooms reflect inconsistent feedback to students. Students receive progress reports throughout each marking period. For example, most students know what area they are weak in. Feedback such as "improve on fractions and grammar," or "work on punctuation and spelling," is known. However, they weren't able to state the steps needed to be successful.
- A review of student work both posted and in folders revealed that teacher feedback is sometimes connected to a rubric and often does not provide actionable next steps to students. The majority of teacher comments were limited to "very well structured" or "good work." Students stated that they received a rubric at the end of a writing assignment in English language arts and that they used it to assess their work before their teacher grades it.
- Students support each other in group work and during turn and talks. In one kindergarten classroom level appropriate rubrics that included pictures as well as text for students to use were posted. Yet, in a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade English language arts classroom students were provided a checklist to use when reviewing their answers or a partner's answers. However in only a few classes were students provided a checklist or a rubric to peer-assess or self-assess their work.

## Additional Findings

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

School leaders and faculty ensure the curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. The curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

### Impact

Students, including students with disabilities and English language learners, have access to curricula and tasks that consistently require them to demonstrate higher-order thinking skills across grades and subjects thereby promoting college and career readiness.

### Supporting Evidence

- Writing is embedded across grades and content areas. Every classroom displays a Gallery of Writers bulletin board to reflect the most recent published piece of writing for each student. For instance, during an interdisciplinary social studies and English language arts unit in grade 5, students are required to use textual evidence from informational and literary texts to support their claim about “How are acts of courage revealed?”
- Unit plans across grades and content areas use a common template that identifies Common Core Learning Standards, instructional shifts, and student supports. All units are guided by essential questions, and enduring understandings that manifest in unit assessments. School leaders and teacher teams review unit plans with a protocol to ensure unit tasks are sufficiently rigorous for students to meet the standards.
- A review of curriculum documents show that teacher teams revised the ReadyGen English language arts curriculum to increase the amount of writing required of students, deepen vocabulary development, and expand higher-order thinking skills. An English language arts unit map in kindergarten was adapted to expand on the essential questions and enduring understandings. Teachers created a list of important unit vocabulary and identified scaffolds throughout the unit based on word type and structure. Students complete short formative writing assignments throughout the unit and complete a final performance based writing assessment connected to the readings throughout the unit.

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

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and school-wide beliefs about how students learn best. Teaching strategies consistently provide all students access to the curricula.

### **Impact**

All students, including students with disabilities and English language learners, engage in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in their work products. Teaching practices are informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Teaching practices connect to the school wide belief in the workshop model, and opportunity for student discussion. For example, in a 4<sup>th</sup> grade English language arts classroom student groups collaborate on answering higher order thinking questions about their assigned text. Each groups' assigned questions were based on the student's proficiency level. Students had roles and reminded each other they needed to use evidence from the text in their answer. Students wrote details and answers on post-it notes before sharing with the group.
- Students are provided with differentiated materials to provide multiple entry points into the lesson skills and standards. For instance, in a second grade social studies lesson, after a whole class read aloud, students returned to their groups to read and answer questions from their texts. Teacher created graphic organizers and sentence strips were provided to some groups to assist them in accessing the material.
- Students with disabilities and English language learners are provided with language supports and lesson modifications to support their learning. For instance, in a grade 4/5 special education bridge class students reviewed and practiced proper academic vocabulary to begin a lesson on adding mixed numbers. The teacher created an interactive activity on the SMARTboard in which students could use and apply the vocabulary words. These words were reinforced throughout the lesson and in all student materials. Students were able to use appropriate academic vocabulary during the class and group discussions.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire school community and provide aligned professional development. The school provides parent workshops that help place students on a path to college and career readiness.

### **Impact**

The culture of high expectations for the school community results in a coherent system of mutual accountability throughout the school community. Ongoing feedback helps families understand their child's progress towards expectations and provides a path to college and career readiness.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- The principal and school leaders conduct monthly walkthroughs with each mini-house using the Quality Review rubric and Danielson Framework for Teaching. School leaders' norm and calibrate their ratings to provide consistent and actionable feedback to teachers. Teachers receive frequent and timely feedback about their practice through the use of short cycles of observation.
- New teacher orientation and mentor programs ensure teaching practices remain consistent across the school. One week prior to the start of the school year new teachers come to the school for professional development and onboarding activities. Untenured teachers and teachers in need of support receive a mentor throughout the year. Mentors are also trained on mentoring strategies and monitoring.
- The school's guidance counselor, family newsletters, and family workshops keep families informed of the Common Core Learning Standards and learning strategies. Recent workshops have been conducted on the Common Core Learning Standards, upcoming state testing, grade articulation, and strategies families can use at home to support their child's learning and prepare them for college and careers.
- Family Tuesday's provide families with additional opportunities to engage with their teacher. Teachers keep logs of family conferences and there is an increase in parents attending conferences. Teachers stated that they are more connected to their students' families this year. Parents stated that they appreciate the opportunity to meet with their child's teacher about progress.