Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Edward K. Ellington
Elementary School Q140
166-01 116th Avenue
Queens
NY 11434

Principal: David Norment

Date of review: November 24, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Rhonda Dawn Farkas
Edward K. Ellington is an elementary school with 550 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 73% Black, 15% Hispanic, 1% White, 2% Asian, and 9% other students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 9% 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 92.0%.

### School Quality Criteria

#### Instructional Core

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<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Celebration</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<td>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</td>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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#### School Culture

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<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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#### Systems for Improvement

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<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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Findings
Across grades and content areas, teaching practices and academic tasks provide relevant entry points. Curricula are aligned to the Common Core and promote success for students on their path to college and beyond.

Impact
Curricula and instruction are thoughtfully constructed and extend student thinking. Unit and lesson plans are matched to students’ needs and improve the cognitive capacity of all learners.

Supporting Evidence
- Across classrooms and content areas, students engage in learning that requires them to interface with productive struggle, such as reading complex texts and constructing evidence-based arguments. Students were engaged in collaborative discussions or “team talk,” demonstrated higher order thinking, and produced high-level work products that reflect the instructional shifts, such as making evidentiary arguments based on texts, both in conversation as well as writing. This was reflected in a third grader’s essay in which she wrote about character traits and interactions that were identified during a conflict in the story Night of the Spadefoot Toad, by Bill Harley.

- Teacher modeling, the availability of T-charts and other graphic organizers, close reading, and extension activities are provided for lessons across the school. For example, in a third grade class, students who required strategic support were provided with a web organizer to illustrate their thinking about the concept of a day on both the earth and the moon. Similarly, another group was engaged in a close reading lesson on the notion of the new moon. To provide extensions for advanced learners, students created their own graphic organizers to compare and contrast the cycles of the earth and the moon.

- In a third grade class, students responded to high level thought-provoking questions, such as, “How does the moon’s position in relationship to the sun affect what the moon looks like to someone on Earth?”

- In a fourth grade class visited, the teachers had three groups they entitled intensive, strategic, and benchmark to meet the varied needs of their diverse group of learners. The teacher provided tiered levels of gradient support during a lesson on analyzing word choice to read and comprehending informational text using the anchor text entitled Movers and Shapers.
Finding
The school uses common assessments and rubrics aligned with the school’s curricula to appraise student performance, inform instructional adjustments, and determine student progress across grades and subject areas.

Impact
Grade level teachers use data from common assessments, ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessments to make timely adjustments to instruction, thus enhancing teachers’ ability to consistently address and meet individual student needs in a timely manner.

Supporting Evidence
- According to the 2014 School Quality Snapshot, student progress was noted, as evidenced by the 4% and 7% increases in proficiency in English language arts (ELA) and math, respectively. Similarly, results from 2014 New York State assessment data revealed a 9% gain in ELA proficiency and a 14% improvement in math proficiency among students with disabilities.

- In classrooms visited, many teachers engaged in the practice of checking for understanding during lessons through conference notes and checklists and modified instruction accordingly to ensure that learning was immediately impacted. For example, in a fourth grade Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, the teachers identified strengths, concerns, and wrote action plans to address next steps. Other teachers made immediate adjustments, such as one of the teachers in a fifth grade ICT class, who accessed an image of a leap on her iPad when she realized that one of her English language learners needed visual support to understand some of the text-based vocabulary while reading the text Night of the Spadefoot Toads, by Bill Harley.

- There was widespread use of exit slips, self-assessment, and peer feedback, in the form of “glows and grows,” and the use of visual aids, such as starfall.com, to adjust lessons and ensure access to the curriculum for a diversity of learners across many classrooms observed. In response to a paper based on the theme “Depending on Each Other,” one fifth grader wrote on his classmate’s paper, “You did a good job using punctuation and capitalization correctly. Next time, use paragraphs to organize your ideas.”

- Though formative assessments and ongoing checks for understanding are consistently used to ascertain student progress, uncover trends, and establish school wide goals, the practice of teachers making effective adjustments to instruction and ensuring students are aware of their next learning steps is not yet systemic across the vast majority of classrooms.
Findings
School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and consistently emphasize higher-order skills and rigorous habits for all learners across grades and subject areas.

Impact
Purposeful decisions around revisions to curricula include the planning and sequencing of rigorous academic tasks across all grades and content areas, promote coherence, and position all students well for college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence
- The school has adopted ReadyGEN and GO Math! as their core curricula. This year, they have updated and revised their curriculum maps to ensure the inclusion of essential questions, unit foci, learning standards, skills, module goals, and objectives. In addition, curricular documents include domain-specific vocabulary, anchor and supporting texts, assessments, and suggestions for the provision of multiple entry points, such as incorporating digital media and graphic organizers to meet the needs of a wide range of learners, including the school’s relevant subgroups, such as students with disabilities and English language learners.

- Lesson plans across the school integrate the instructional shifts across content areas, include domain-specific vocabulary, text-based conversational prompts, Webb’s Depth of Knowledge Level 3 or 4 questions, strategic grouping, and scaffolds to provide access for all learners.

- Similarly, math curricular units include critical areas of focus, such as developing understanding and fluency with multi-digit multiplication, dividing to find quotients involving multi-digit dividends, fractions equivalence, addition and subtraction of fractions with like denominators, multiplication of fractions by whole numbers, and classifying and analyzing geometric figures based on their properties.
Findings
High expectations are consistently communicated to staff and families through actionable feedback from observations and progress updates from student assessments.

Impact
Actionable feedback provided to staff, students, and families includes clear next steps for improvement, thus bolstering accountability and collective growth to influence student learning outcomes, reduce the achievement gap, and position students on course to college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence
- School leaders and teachers collaboratively decided to embed a 45-minute workshop model for writing across the school. Within this time frame, teachers are expected to conduct a mini-lesson, independent or small group work time, and a sharing session.

- School members have ongoing communication with families about students through progress reports, emails, and phone calls, and receive feedback from the teachers on their children’s progress after each unit, independent reading level assessment, and performance-based assessment. In addition, teachers provide suggestions for ways that parents can become actively engaged in the education of their children and support their learning.

- The school now uses PupilPath Skedula, an interactive website that provides pertinent information regarding progress, including student assignments, projects, classwork, homework, tests, projects, and handouts. Parents assert that this platform keeps them informed about their children’s progress towards the school's expectations.

- Through the work of teacher teams, such as the use of grade-wide rubrics and a monthly grade team newsletter, there is a common language and collective understanding within and across grades for what constitutes high quality work.

- The principal disseminates a weekly publication, entitled PS 140 Ellington Weekly, in which he addressed grade-level expectations as required by the Common Core Learning Standards. In addition, the “Principal's Corner,” features academic vocabulary. For example, in his reference to the text, The Case of the Gasping Garbage he cited the word shrieked. He also made connections to other texts, such as Stellaluna and Charlotte’s Web, and asserted that, “every student in first through third grade should know this word.”
Quality Indicator: 4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development  
Rating: Proficient

Findings
The majority of teachers engage in structured collaborations focused on the analysis of assessment data and student work and the development of unit plans.

Impact
By sharing grade-level specific data, teachers are able to identify school-wide trends and ensure school-wide alignment and coherence. Consequently, teachers embrace a consistent and shared commitment to the improvement of pedagogical practices and progress towards goals for groups of students and are instrumental in making key decisions.

Supporting Evidence
- Reflecting on analyses of data, grade-level teacher teams collaboratively developed unit plans in ELA and math that include the instructional shifts such as focus, coherence, and rigor, as well as materials needed, desired results, and specific task modifications, accommodations, and extensions. As determined by their analysis of data and student work products, teacher teams are in the process of formulating a school-wide writing action plan. Thus far, they have identified the concerns and are in the process of pinpointing next steps to support students in the areas of need.

- Teams of teachers analyzed student data from the 2014 New York State ELA and math exams and identified particular standards and questions with which the students encountered difficulty, such as drawing inferences from texts. They subsequently decided upon grade-level instructional foci and specific teaching strategies, such as “providing opportunities for students to practice supporting their inferences by quoting examples from the text,” which serves as evidence for how teacher teams have had an impact on school-wide curricular and instructional decisions, and how the school has a collective focus on school-wide expectations. Members of one team shared, “We are like a family here; we’re a team!”

- To support the school’s focus on academic vocabulary, the instructional lead teachers provided coaching for their colleagues, using an interactive PowerPoint presentation on *Academic Vocabulary in the ELA and Content Area Classroom*. During this time, they emphasized the need to incorporate the use of tiered words, such as high frequency tier 2 words, and domain-specific tier 3 words during instruction, as necessitated by the instructional shifts. Students in classes observed were seen using transferrable, or cross-content, vocabulary in their conversations and work products.

- To support students with solving word problems, teacher teams collaboratively make the decision to provide students with tools such as mnemonics to help them become independent learners. For example, they taught students to use “CUBES,” a prompt that reminds students to Circle the numbers, Underline important words, Box the question, Eliminate unnecessary information, and Solve and check.