

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

East Flatbush Community Research School

K581

**905 Winthrop Street
Brooklyn
NY 11203**

Principal: David Manning

Dates of review: March 5 – 6, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Beverly A. Wilkins

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

East Flatbush Community Research School is a middle school with 275 students from grade six through grade eight. The school population comprises 95% Black, 4% Hispanic, 0.5% White, and 0.5% Asian students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 92.6%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's emphasis on students' personal development has established a climate of support conducive to learning. (1.4)
 - Students and parents collectively agree that administration and support staff have addressed order and discipline in classrooms and corridors promoting a safe school climate. This deliberate focus on creating a serious and productive school tone has led to a decline in recidivism causing a 62% decrease in low-level infractions and a positive shift in the school's safety data. Conclusively, the majority of parents interviewed reported that this year teachers and students exhibit higher levels of respect for each other and for school rules, resulting in better classroom management and positive attitudes toward learning.
 - Driven by social issues such as Community Values and Beliefs; Conflict, Adversity and Change; and Social Justice, the school's community research theme provides students with opportunities to examine relevant societal issues, norms and cultural values that provoke controversy within local and global communities. Because students are able to make personal and world connections to real life dilemmas, their understanding of civic responsibility is heightened. In turn, awareness of struggles faced by others sparks the desire to succeed in school in life, as shared during the student meeting.
- A comprehensive collection of relevant school data provides school leaders and faculty with information that drives school improvement. (2.1)
 - School leadership uses State data in English language arts and math to track proficiency levels for all grades. In addition, the citywide Progress Report, Performance Series growth rates, school report cards and analysis of Acuity results assist the tracking of literacy and math performance across the school. Through this work, school leaders readily identify patterns in learning. The Online Occurrence Reporting System data and student attendance information are collected, evaluated and analyzed, and this analysis highlights trends and recurring behaviors leading to clear identification of areas in need of development. Indications have led to the strengthening of systems in both instruction and school climate.
 - English language arts and math Acuity assessments, customized Instructionally Targeted Assessments, quarterly writing and math conferences and student work aid school leaders in aggregating formative information to meet the needs of student performing far below grade level. Thorough scrutiny of periodic assessments, interventions such as small group pull out sessions, extended day instruction and online comprehension and math programs expand students' opportunities to improve upon summative results. This has led to 70% of students who scored at level 1 on the English language arts Acuity Predictive Assessment in 2011 performing at level 2 in 2012.

- The principal has strategically utilized the school budget and space to provide additional resources, including the hiring of staff, which allows the school to offer extra support in order to increase students' learning outcomes. (1.3)
 - After analyzing formative and summative data, the principal made specific changes in programs and staff assignments. The organization of the school into grade pods places teachers on a particular grade within close proximity of each other, fostering closer collaboration and the reduction of movement during passing periods. This change results in a calmer collaborative climate facilitating an environment conducive to efficient use of instructional time. Hence, the school has exceeded its goal of a 25% reduction in infractions occurring in classrooms. To scaffold better student performance, the dean has a dual role as the special education coordinator, an additional assistant principal oversees instruction, a community associate position and lead teacher assignments undergird the school's reorganization. This strategy for budgeting and space utilization supports academic objectives, which is evident in the school-wide instructional model, completion of class assignments and projects, and students' daily attendance.
 - Faculty and staff that meet twice per week in department and grade teams to collaborate on lessons and refine curriculum. This collaborative work supports the small-school vision established by the school's founder. In addition, student schedules also support school goals. Sixty-two minute instructional blocks for seventh and eighth graders and ninety-minute blocks for sixth graders ensure students have optimal schedules for learning. The extended time in classes, as well as decreased time in transition between classes, increases opportunities for high-level engagement of students in challenging tasks.
- The school leaders have established efficient systems for monitoring teaching with a clear focus on improving teacher effectiveness. (4.1)
 - In its second year of the New York City Department of Education Talent Management Pilot, the school has developed clearly defined protocols for observations and professional goal setting aligned with components of the Danielson's Framework for Teaching. In order to support teacher effectiveness, alongside a coach, the principal collaboratively identifies rubric-based objectives with teachers such that all teachers focus on their pedagogical needs centered on whole school targets. Hence, short frequent cycles of feedback, using common language, provide evidence and next steps that empower teachers "to own and understand expectations," leading to improved delivery of instruction. Further, a network instructional specialist, assistant principal and lead teachers help newest and developing teachers plan lessons and evaluate their practice. As a result, teacher evaluations focus on three domains of professional practice, and teacher assignments match areas of strength.
- School leaders and faculty work together in a reflective and collaborative manner and take advantage of one another's expertise in order to improve practice. (4.3)
 - School leaders are astutely aware of teacher needs so professional development opportunities enable teachers and support staff to build

capacity through collegial collaborations that reinforce instructional goals and nurture the development of best practices. This deliberate work cultivates teacher leaders who facilitate math and technology trainings, mentors to ensure special education and Special Education Student Information System compliance, and a lead paraprofessional to assist clear roles for educational assistants. Teachers also participate in intervisitations to schools within the network. In addition, four teachers receive one-to-one coaching from a Ramapo consultant around classroom management. School leaders attend network sessions and work with a coach to strengthen their leadership in Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) work, which promotes teacher effectiveness. As a result, a menu of professional activities bring teachers and school leaders together in order to shift classroom practices, which has increased the quality of student work evidenced in power paragraph writing and an intentional move from teacher lecturing to more student-centered activities.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to increase rigor, coherence and alignment with CCLS in the school's curricula, ensuring that all students make progress in their learning. (1.1)
 - School leaders and faculty are implementing curricula aligned to State standards and have begun the work of integrating the CCLS into unit planning. However, curriculum maps are not yet fully developed, and units of study lack key elements such as delineated tasks, checks for understanding and rubrics that are well aligned to learning objectives and skills. Due to minimal development of this work across grades and subject areas, a rigorous coherent curriculum across the school is currently missing, thereby hindering student progress.
 - Typically, student assignments require them to compare and contrast, chart details or complete tables. Lessons do not consistently facilitate rigorous tasks, however, nor do they promote higher order thinking. As a result, students' learning is insufficiently accelerated toward secondary readiness.
- Ensure teachers do more to differentiate their lessons by planning activities that closely link to students' different skill sets in order to foster higher levels of thinking and participation. (1.2)
 - While a school-wide belief about how students learn best is evident in the current trend of the workshop model, implementation varies across classrooms. Consequently, instruction does not consistently provide students with inspiring differentiated activities infused with varied teaching strategies. Classroom visits showed students working in small groups, but activities in a few classrooms did not offer appropriate challenge for particular students within the group. For example, questioning in a math class produced correct answers, but lacked discussion of reasoning or process. Similarly, in an English language arts class teacher questioning led to teacher-to-student interaction, but did not instigate whole class discussion. Because all lessons do not provide multiple entry points to

access learning, students work at compliant levels of engagement and participation, thwarting full performance potential.

- Clarify and broaden the use of common assessments and rubrics so that teachers regularly utilize on-going evaluations that lead to timely modifications in instruction. (2.2)
 - Presently, teachers are undertaking the work of analyzing basic data streams and have endeavored to identify trends; however, this work is in its developmental stage. The principal admits that forming coherent assessments and expanding the use of checks for understanding are areas for improvement. Similarly, while teams of teachers discuss common assessments such as newly created rubrics to elevate curriculum and instruction, this work is also new and has had limited impact on instructional decisions at this time. Additionally, teachers do not amass comparable data. A review of selected teacher binders revealed teachers inconsistently collect and analyze data and do not utilize similar data at the classroom level to supplement summative information, thereby limiting opportunities to set and revise common targeted goals, effectively differentiate instruction across content areas or to accurately measure student progress in order to address and meet all students' learning needs.
- Formalize goal setting and tracking practices in all core subjects and identify clear targets and checkpoints so that parents, students and teachers fully understand next steps toward higher academic achievement. (3.3)
 - Teachers use accessible student data such as homework, quizzes, projects, conference records and quarterly assessments, which varies among teachers, to set individual student goals. However, there is no evidence that all teachers set individual or group goals based on these data sets. Therefore, it is difficult for them to assess whether some students are making adequate progress. Because continuous tracking of progress for all students has not taken root across the school to leverage necessary adjustments to class level plans, progress for students performing at higher proficiency levels is hindered.
 - Students expressed that teachers help them to understand their progress and "push them to the limit" in support of their achievement. Nevertheless, student work products that include written feedback to students are consistently devoid of next steps for improved performance. Parents also reported that online progress reports provide vague information such as "needs improvement" and "highly motivated." This lack of clear next steps impedes families' and students' ability to seek appropriate support to further achievement.
- Ensure monitoring and evaluation of student progress precisely focuses on all student groups, particularly higher achievers, to accelerate learning. (5.3)
 - The principal uses a variety of accountability measures to monitor and evaluate student progress. This work results in long-term planning with a primary focus on students performing far below grade level standards. However, there is limited focus on setting advance targets for groups of students at the higher end of the learning continuum. Consequently, this

low-level monitoring of student progress results in limited efforts to accelerate learning for all students.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: East Flatbush Community Research School	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score		X		
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?		X		
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?		X		
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			X	
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X	
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			X	
2.2 Align assessments to curriculum, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?		X		
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?		X		
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students progress toward school and class expectations?		X		
Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X	
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?		X		
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?		X		
3.4 Communicate high expectations to staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?		X		

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?			X				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?		X					
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?			X				
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, guidance/advisement support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?		X					
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?		X					
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?		X					
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?		X					
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed