



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Elijah Stroud Middle School

Middle School K353

**750 Classon Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11238**

Principal: Tricia Delauney

**Date of review: February 27, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Debra R. Lamb, Ed.D.**

The School Context

The Elijah Stroud Middle School is a middle school with 253 students from grades 6 through 8. The school population comprises 78% Black, 15% Hispanic, 6% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 25% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 91.8%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
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	Additional Findings	Proficient
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	Focus	Developing
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	Additional Findings	Proficient
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Celebration	Well Developed
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Additional Findings	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide quality training to help meet these expectations. Expectations connected to a path of college and career readiness are effectively communicated to families.

Impact

A culture of mutual accountability for high expectations exists among staff and families in support of college and career readiness expectations for students.

Supporting Evidence

- Every class is named after a college or university, such as Brown University (Class 601), Howard University (Class 701), and Princeton University (801). Staff were reminded to reference classes by these university names to promote college readiness. Class profiles are regularly updated by teachers on the school's website, which is accessible by students and their parents. These class profiles highlight "big ideas" for the month's learning activities. For example, a 7th grade math teacher's class page for the students in the "Harvard University" class included a focus on Common Core Standards in the areas of ratios and proportional relationships, expressions and equations, and geometry, together with the associated instructional goals. In addition to standards and goals, a 6th grade teacher's class page includes online and workbook resources and video tutorials.
- The *Habits of Mind* are 16 dispositions or mental resources of successful people that can help prepare students for life's challenges. These *Habits of Mind* are promoted throughout this school daily, with a focus on the characteristic of "persistence." School goals are discussed with students during advisory periods, which focus on college and career readiness. The school's clubs foster student leadership, socialization, community awareness, and college and career readiness. Within each club, students explore different careers that exist within the club's field of focus. Students self-select among such club offerings as photography, fashion, newsletter, technology, theatre, music and dance. The school has an active Student Government Organization (SGO) that works closely with school administration to build school spirit and reinforce school expectations, policies and procedures. The SGO takes the lead in such community service ventures as the Sock & Glove Drive, Canned Food Drive, Penny Harvest, and Nursing Home Supply Drive. The school community participated in the "Making Strides against Breast Cancer Walk." The SGO also leads special assembly programs highlighting the accomplishments of their peers.
- The school hosted its first "Dads Take Your Child to School Day," with over 40 fathers/father figures in attendance. At the beginning of the school year, a parent workshop entitled "The Middle School Experience" was presented by the parent coordinator. The workshop addressed expectations, college and career readiness, student health/fitness, and behavioral expectations. Parents were encouraged to (a) have regular conversations with their child; (b) Set academic and financial goals; (c) Assist their child with resume building; (d) Visit some high schools and colleges; and (d) Save for college tuition. Parents of 8th graders are regularly updated on important deadlines and processes connected to the high school application process through the school newsletter, *Blue Lightening*, as well as other communication modes.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best. Teaching strategies providing multiple entry points into the curricula are inconsistently implemented. Student work products and discussions also reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

Teaching practices are informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts. However, there is uneven engagement in appropriately challenging tasks as well as uneven demonstration of higher-order thinking in student work products, including the work of English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs).

Supporting Evidence

- The school's professional development cycles for December through March focus on assessment in instruction (Danielson 3d) and questioning and discussion techniques (Danielson 3b). Sample professional development activities include (a) peer inter-visitations using the Danielson Framework to provide feedback to colleagues on assessment practices like strategies to check for understanding; (b) using student friendly rubrics aligned to the Common Core Standards for peer and self-assessment of tasks and work products; and (c) creating questions based on Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels to deepen student thinking and understanding. "We had a lot of deficiencies with regard to how our teachers understood rigor," said the principal.
- In a 6th grade social studies class, four groups of students were involved in creating claims by annotating and summarizing differentiated texts about Ancient Greece to discuss and support their claim during a class debate. The first group focused on the government of Greece; the second group on religion in Greece; the third group on the geography of Ancient Greece; and the fourth group on inventions and advancements of Greece. Each group was tasked with creating a graphic organizer based on the reading. Students adopted different roles within the groups, including: Scribe, researcher, leaders, starter, finisher, and contributors, which were all defined on the SMARTboard. The teacher circulated among the groups asking such question as, "What did you share with the group? Did your group agree with you? What else is interesting about the geography of Greece?" Groups charted their discussion using accountable talk stems.
- The learning objective in an 8th grade math class was "How do we translate a figure (or a shape) on the coordinate plan?" The teacher incorporated a kinesthetic strategy to engage students by asking them to physically "translate yourself one step to the side and back." The teacher modeled how to translate a triangle, and students followed along as he labeled various points of the triangle. One student wrote, "When you translate something, you change it. Well everything in life changes. I have seen a flower die and then regrow again. To translate the point three units would mean to move it down three times." Although there was evidence of explicit teaching and modeling for students, students did not discuss or provide justifications for what they were doing, and there was limited checking for understanding or incorporation of multiple entry points into the lesson.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricular tasks are planned using student work.

Impact

The school's decisions to build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students is purposeful. A diversity of learners have access to the curricula and tasks and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal explained her school's decision to adopt the curricular Common Core-aligned programs now in use. "We were only at 3% of our kids on grade level." The school selected *Common Core Code X™* (Scholastic) primarily because it was less scripted and open to creativity than *Expeditionary Learning*. However, teachers have added additional resources to *Code X™* program. The school previously used a balanced literacy approach within a teacher-designed curriculum. Teachers regularly infuse resources from the state's EngageNY website. "With *Code X™*, we've improved student performance by 2%," said the principal. *Connected Mathematics Project 3™ (CMP3)* was selected for the school's math program, replacing the *IMPACT Mathematics* (Glencoe/McGraw Hill) program used previously. "We didn't want to be in the position of our school choosing something else and then our kids not show progress," said the principal. To assist students reading below grade level *Reading A-Z* and *mySciLEARN™* (Scientific Learning™) are implemented.
- The school has embedded units the grade 8 English language arts (ELA) curriculum to promote college readiness. For example, the topic of a five-week unit implemented from mid-October through end of November is "College 101," which expands upon *Code X™* of the same name. The goal of the unit was as follows: "Students will understand that in order to get into college you must be able to demonstrate that you are more than your grades by exhibiting your personality traits through your college application essays." This unit was aligned to the Common Core writing standards. The essential questions are: "What does it take to achieve success in today's world of higher education?" and "What does it take to demonstrate individual uniqueness in a college application essay?" The task assigned to students was: "Based on what we learned about successful college application essays, write your own college application essay. Write about an experience you've had or an interest or challenge you've faced that will show your character. Your goal is to demonstrate and illustrate your personality through your essay so that a college admissions committee can gain more insight about you and your life."
- Reciprocal reading, a well-researched method used to develop learners' reading skills, promote higher order thinking, develop listening and talking, and ensure access to the curriculum for all learners, is used by the school particularly with SWDs and ELLs. A "backward design" process to plan learning experiences and instruction, keeping the final assessment in mind. Teacher teams use a protocol focused when examining student work to analyze the patterns and trends of students' understanding and misunderstandings. The outcome is modifications to curricula content and instructional strategies, such as incorporating "cubing" as a strategy to construct meaning about a given topic.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. Common assessments are used to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas.

Impact

Actionable feedback is provided to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Curricula and instruction are adjusted based on the results of common assessments.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's assessment expectations, including grading policy, use of portfolios and work folders, is described in detail in the school's *Team Handbook of Guidelines and Procedures for All Staff*. Portfolio checklists for each unit ensure that there is consistency across classes so that teachers and students are clear about expectations. For example, in Brown University's ELA class, the portfolio checklist for "Unit Three—World Wonders/Argument" includes (a) an essay about energy resources; (b) an argumentative essay about the world wonders; (c) artifacts from the student debate; and (d) the unit test. Progress reports are provided to parents and students at the midpoint of each marking period. The school hosts a "Data Day" during every marking period, for a total of four days per school year, on which every student in every subject area looks at where they are, reflects on why they are there, and discusses their strengths and areas for improvement with teachers. To address parent questions and concerns about state assessments, a workshop presented by the Center for Integrated Teacher Education (CITE) was held in February on the Common Core Standards and instructional shifts.
- The school uses *JumpRope*, an online platform used by the school for progress reporting. Pearson Reading-Level Indicators are used to assess independent reading levels. The results (scores, points, percentages, and grades) of individual student entrance and exit tickets are tabulated electronically and accessible to teachers for instructional planning purposes.
- Teachers frequently track student mastery of Common Core Standards. For example, an 8th grade math teacher's data report includes (a) the standards addressed—8. Expressions & Equations (EE) 5, 8.EE.6, and 8.F.A.3 (Functions); (b) the type of assessment—formative; (c) the date of the assessment; (d) the number & percentage of students performing on Levels 1-4 on this assessment; (e) the differentiated instructional strategies to be employed with students at each level, ELLs and SWDs, such as scaffolding, videos, students creating their own real world problems, and peer intervention. Teachers were provided data about the strands they should be working on this year if they want to see better achievement results. The data report asked teachers to explain to the following: (a) Trends/patterns/gaps based on the assessment data results; (b) Steps taken to adjust lessons based on assessment data to meet the needs of all students; and (c) Next steps and/or future teaching implications.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

Impact

There have been some shared improvements in teacher practice and some mastery of goals for groups of students. Teachers have built leadership capacity and have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- During a teacher meeting of the math team, five teachers watched most of an 8-minute video taped the day before on the topic of proportions. Every team member had been videotaped once by the team. The video-taped teacher explained that the “Do Now” was based on learning from the prior lesson. On the video, the teacher asked the students, “The correct answer to this problem is 18% ... I want an honest show of hands if you had 18%.” Seven of 22 students raised their hands. The teacher circulated to the seven students to check their work, then said, “32% of you got the correct answer ... If I said 32% now, then next time you do these questions, should the percentage go up or down?” Students: “Up.” Teacher: “Talk to your neighbor ... What was difficult about solving this problem. If you got it right, what process did you use? We’ll have a minute to share.” A four-quadrant graphic organizer was distributed to capture the team’s thoughts on the design of the lesson viewed on the video. Team members gave feedback to the teacher videotaped. “I like that you had kids work with their partners,” said one teacher. The video-taped teacher responded, “Those students who got it correct were sent to the other tables.” He added: “It’s not that they understand, it’s the rate in which they work.” Another teacher shared that she too struggles with students who work slower and wanted to know how he manages. The video-taped teacher responded: “Everyone has pre-printed notes which takes away from the time it takes to take notes. They learn better when they talk to each other ... they understand each other’s language. The last lesson I did, I said ‘Ask three before me.’”
- The school has a curriculum team that meets weekly. A data analyst was engaged to work with the ELA and math teams, particularly in the areas that students have struggled, specifically ratio and proportions, answering open-ended questions, building stamina, and using text-based evidence. The data analyst supports teachers’ instructional decisions as teams examine and analyze quantitative and qualitative data reflecting student strengths and weaknesses. Veteran as well as novice teachers serve as facilitators of team meetings.
- Seasoned teachers serve as mentors to new teachers (mentees). These mentors commit to engaging with their mentees in such professional development activities as study groups, peer observations, and common planning. A new teacher described her collaboration with her colleague/mentor: “I was familiar with the standards, but my challenge and learning curve was meeting students where they are.” As a result of this professional collaboration, this new teacher was able to speak with kids about reading goals and personal goals and has infused academic intervention services.