



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

East Side Middle School

Middle School 114

**331 East 91st Street
New York
NY 10128**

Principal: David Getz

**Date of review: December 18, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Jo Ann Benoit**

The School Context

East Side Middle School is a middle school with 450 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 3% Black, 10% Hispanic, 73% White, and 12% Asian students. The student body includes 0% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 98.0%.

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	Well Developed
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	Additional Findings	Well Developed
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	Focus	Well Developed
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	Well Developed

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 the necessary support to the staff to meet those expectations. In turn, the staff effectively communicates high expectations connected to a path of college and career readiness to students and families.

Impact

The communication of high expectations for all and the high level of support given to meet those expectations lead to a culture for learning and of mutual accountability within the school and successful partnerships with families that enable student progress and ownership of their educational experiences.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal's motto is that all students need to "understand things in deep conceptual ways" and so, teachers need to offer students "many opportunities to learn a concept". Because of this expectation to differentiate to ensure that all students learn at high levels, teachers requested professional support to help them know and better understand their students in order to meet their needs. For example, when teachers felt the need to learn more about Tourette syndrome or body image issues because of their student population, the school leaders abided by their requests, leading to mutual accountability.
- The school communicates in many ways with families in order to engage them in their children's learning and progress. Students are responsible to return assessments signed by their parents to their teachers. This is a practice that the school has put in place to promote conversations between students and parents, as well as parents and the school around student achievement levels.
- In addition to the school's focus on student academic success, it also puts an emphasis on preparing its students socially and emotionally for middle school and beyond. It communicates this expectation to the staff, students and families in many different ways: in the beginning of the year, parents are asked to write a letter about their child to the teachers and the student is also asked to write a similar letter to share their likes, dislikes, learning styles, and goals. This enables the teacher to know the student and thus better plan for them. Parents attend periodic workshops/grade breakfasts at the school. One that stood out for them dealt with communication between parents and children offered by the NYU Child Study Center (one of the school's partners that offer parallel workshops for students). Parents also participate in the principal's book club.
- As the school prepares its students for college and beyond, the students participate in many opportunities provided by the school to exercise leadership and citizenship skills: students participate in student council, clubs they organize and run (for example the Rocket club and the chess collective), they raise funds for different organizations of their choice, they teach elective classes, and in Skype Kenya which puts the students in contact with a school in Kibera, Kenya whom they skype with on a weekly basis and provide resources to that sister school while the mothers on both sides of the Atlantic also communicate through POWER WOMEN, a school-based program which supports AIDS infected mothers in Kibera to put their children through school and survive themselves with this stigma.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use rubrics and common assessments that are aligned to the school's curricula and offer a portrait of student mastery and a clear picture of student progress towards goals.

Impact

The school's coherent assessment practices provide meaningful actionable feedback to students and teachers as well as enable adjustments to the curricula and instructional decisions for all students including ELLs and SWDs.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses regular common assessments to monitor student progress and look at student work in every grade and every subject area. These common assessments enable teachers to group students in class, determine which students need to be invited to additional help sessions before and after school and which students need to be programmed for the skills-based classes that replace the additional year of foreign language for those who struggle academically. Because of this policy, the school's lowest third has made notable progress in ELA and exceptional progress in Math in the last round of State exams. The Integrated Algebra Regents exam is offered to about one-third of the students who show the aptitude for that assessment as well as competitive opportunities such as Math Counts!
- Teachers use their data analyses to adjust curricula as well as assessments for students: in the past, teachers have given students the San Diego Quick Assessment which asks students to read grade level words out of context, when students have shown difficulty with that, teachers would replace the test with the Fountas and Pinnel test which requires them to read full sentences and thus use context clues to decipher words. Teachers also differentiate class assessments for students: although all students are tested on particular concepts within a unit, they can take their assessments verbally, in writing, or in other ways. The number of questions on an assessment can also be differentiated for students helping teachers to assess how well students understand concepts rather than how well they do on tests.
- In Humanities, students and teachers go back and forth with revisions on Google Docs during the development of their essays. In science, students receive their standard progress report with work done by the student, rubrics that delineate strengths and areas for improvement and student reflection and next steps for learning (besides the portfolio).

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and staff ensure that the curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, content standards and the instructional shifts across grades and subject areas. Rigorous habits and higher order tasks are emphasized in the curricula and embedded throughout the contents and grades.

Impact

The school's coherent curricular decisions ensure all students across all grades and subject areas have opportunities to engage in rigorous habits and higher order skills that promote college and career readiness

Supporting Evidence

- The school's curricula in all content areas are aligned to the Common Core, content standards and the instructional shifts. The curricula focus is on project-based learning and allowing students to demonstrate their understanding of concepts and development of skills through hands-on-activities based on their grade level. For example, in humanities classes, 6th graders do a project on Sparta. They have to argue based on their research whether or not to attack Sparta, then compare their own culture to that of Sparta. Eight graders play the role of the council of elders and judge the sixth graders. Seventh graders participate in a mock Supreme Court where students are divided into three groups: the defense, the lawyers for the Federal government and the Supreme Court judges. Students are expected to know in-depth the constitution, legal arguments and the concept of legal precedence to effectively participate in this project. In science, students are asked questions that force them to use their knowledge of the content to solve real world issues: using their knowledge of earth science, students have been asked where to bury a packet of nuclear waste.
- All students participate in Math Congress a few times a year. During Math Congress, students are asked to solve problems that usually take more than one period to solve. This enables the staff to present complex problems to students that are initially too difficult to solve on their own. After initially working through the problem individually, students work in groups to solve the problem, model the solution and present their findings to the class. This allows "students to think as mathematicians" said the principal and to provide peer support and self-assess.
- In lesson plans, lesson objectives are clear and aligned to the Common Core. In some classes, lesson objectives are presented as challenges for students to solve by the end of the lesson. Differentiation is planned in the form of group creation (sometimes homogeneously, other times heterogeneously), small group instruction, differentiation of assessments and materials, adding supplemental materials to support or extend learning, use of visuals, changes in pacing etc.
- Teachers use "flipping the classroom" videos made by them, which allow students to view mini lessons at home. This enables students to preview the next day's lesson ahead of time or review a mini lesson in case they need to at their own pace.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a coherent belief about how students learn best as well as strategically provide multiple entry points and high quality supports and extensions to all students.

Impact

These teaching practices which are informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching, the instructional shifts and by discussions at the team and school levels provide opportunities for all students to be engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, students were answering open-ended questions and debating about topics that pushed their thinking and allowed for discussion between them: in a humanities class, students asked after reading an article on Rosa Parks, “was Rosa Parks planned like Plessy v Ferguson?” and “Wasn’t Rosa Parks in the middle of the bus/in the Black section?” In a science class, as groups were experimenting with paper clips and lab sheets to illustrate how monomers, polymers and cross-linked polymers “move”, they were answering questions such as “what did you have to do to pour it out?”, “Can you be specific? What were you expecting to see”? In a social studies class, students were writing the criteria for each of the four levels of their rubric for an upcoming essay: mastery, accomplished, developing, and beginning.
- Across the vast majority of classrooms, students were working collaboratively mostly in heterogeneous groups, although the groups were fluid. In an English class, a pair of students was debating whether or not the ending shared by the teacher with the whole class was a strong one. One student mentioned that repetition made it strong but the other argued that the goal was still not met there with those words repeated. The teacher then asked the students to turn and talk about what they thought of that exchange.
- During the student interview, students talked about the opportunities they have to talk to one another and think about the work in class. They mentioned that the work in classes is usually difficult but they get to speak with their classmates and support one another. They also spoke about being challenged more this year. One student said “last year, in math, once you solved a problem, you put your head down. This year, you solve a problem, you have to explain it and when you’re done, you get another one”.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based professional collaborations during which they play an integral role in key decisions.

Impact

This practice of collaboration has resulted in school-wide instructional coherence and increased student achievement as well as teachers participating in distributive leadership structures embedded in their daily work that allow them to affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Across the school, teachers talk about the importance for students and teachers to participate in their own learning, collaborate in their work and have multiple ways to show what they know/ can be supported. Teachers talked about the support they receive from the administration when they propose certain changes or have certain requests: teachers share with the administration when and why they want to visit their peers and that is made possible. Teachers modify units based on student data for example: the humanities’ teachers plan to change the unit on colonization to infuse more literacy in that unit and introduce more novels to get students reading and writing more. In science, teachers planned for students to create story boards to help them better understand the movement of tectonic plates because that topic was dense for the 6th graders.
- Teachers meet regularly in grade team, discipline teams and with the administration. Teachers analyze student work and the practices in place in classrooms to support students whose work are looked at in team meetings. During the teacher team meeting observed, the teachers talked about select students, their behavior and their progress and next steps. These also took into account the teachers’ practices that hinder or promote progress for these students: for one student, they talked about the classroom environment having helped him manage his own disability, for another, they listed specific behaviors to share with parents in order to develop strategies to help the student to communicate better and thus become less frustrated.
- Teachers lead the grade and subject team meetings and many of the professional development sessions, as well as choose from a menu of options listing the support they will receive from peers and from the administration. During their inquiry-based professional collaborations, teachers proposed “flipping the classroom” practices, electives and clubs that they would facilitate in order to present students with choice and thus engage them in school life.