



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Emolior Academy

Middle School X383

**1970 West Farms Road
Bronx
NY 10460**

Principal: Derick Spaulding

**Date of review: April 29, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Jorge Estrella**

The School Context

Emolior Academy is a middle school with 250 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 27% Black, 63% Hispanic, 2% White, 5% American Indian or Alaskan Native and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 18% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 90.0%.

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	Developing
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	Developing
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	Proficient
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:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders communicate high expectations consistently to the entire staff and provide professional learning to help meet these expectations. A culture for learning exists that communicates high expectations regarding student progress to families.

Impact

School leaders developed systems and structures that hold staff members accountable to the school's high expectations. School leaders and staff members offer families ongoing feedback to understand their child's progress towards college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicates with staff regarding school expectations for learning and professionalism in the form of faculty handbook, memos and emails as well as *Staff Weekly* sent out each week. In addition, scheduled professional development cycles connected to specific domains of the Danielson Framework for Teaching support teachers towards meeting the expectations. The principal uses classroom observations and feedback from classroom visits to hold staff accountable for meeting instructional expectations.
- The principal reported that the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) Leadership Team is part of the decision making progress of the instructional focus and professional development and strategies for targeting the school Instructional Focus. Furthermore, the Professional Learning Committee (PLC) was created and worked on the professional learning plan for the 2014-2015 school year is aligned to focus components of the Danielson Framework for Teaching.
- Parents spoke about the open communication that exists between their home and the school. They shared their experience with TeacherEase, an online grading platform that provides parents the opportunity to track their children's progress. In addition, on Tuesday parent outreach day, teachers meet with parents or make telephone calls to keep them updated on their child's progress. Furthermore, the school uses SchoolMessenger to inform parents about their children's attendance. Also, the school created the Emolior App to keep families informed of school events.
- Parents reported that school leaders and teachers are knowledgeable, motivating, friendly and approachable and the support and guidance students receive are positioning them to move to the next level. Students also shared this and informed that they are proud to attend the school. Students stated, "When I enter to my school, I feel safe", and "In this school, I always have someone available to support me if I have any problems or worries with my school work or any type of issues." Parents mentioned that they believe their children are engaged and safe in school.
- For high school articulation, the guidance counselor offers High School Transition workshops for parents. In addition, the school offers specialized High School prep as well as High School Readiness-Prep for seventh and eighth grade students. Another example is that the Emolior Academy established the first ever High School Fair in the school, for this event, fifteen high schools participated. In addition, the school sponsors trips to colleges and universities.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

While some classrooms revealed teaching practices and strategies aligned to the curriculum with instructional activities to provide rigor and challenge for all learners. In other classrooms, instructional practices inconsistently offer multiple entry points into the curricula and teachers struggled with effective planning and implementation of curriculum and tasks.

Impact

As a result of inconsistent pedagogical practices; there are missing opportunities for some students to demonstrate high levels of thinking and participation in their learning or have an accurate understanding of content as demonstrated in their work products and group discussions.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal shared that there is a common believe that clarifying expectations and having systems and structures in place are critical for student learning and that students learn best when they are engaged and have clear expectations and routines. Furthermore, there is also an instructional emphasis on engaging students through visual resources, annotating text, student discussion opportunities, checking for understanding, close reading and reciprocal reading strategies.
- In classrooms visited, some teachers were observed using strategies to provide multiple entry points such as teacher modeling and visual aids via the SMARTboard to engage students in high levels of thinking and participation. For example, in a 7th grade social studies class and in a 6th grade science class, teachers were using the SMARTboard as an interactive tool to engage most students. Additionally, the science teacher provided native language support to English language learners (ELLs). However, in a social studies class the SMARTboard was used just to display text and ELLs were working form the textbook, there was no evidence of providing different entry points to address the needs of ELLs.
- Across classrooms, students were using the same graphic organizer and tasks reflecting uneven use of multiple strategies to address the needs of the ELLs, students with disabilities (SWDs) and higher achievers.
- Although there were opportunities for peer-to-peer discussion in some classes, whole group and small group discussions were generally teacher dominated with teachers asking questions of individual students who then responded directly to the teacher. In addition, teachers limited wait time for student responses and often moved quickly through lessons with multiple questions rapidly asked. For example, in a social studies class as well as in the Spanish class, there were limited opportunities for student ownership of the discourse, as the pattern of teacher to student interaction was call and response. Therefore, students missed the opportunity to make their thinking visible and to interact to each other.
- Delivery of rigorous instruction varies for ELLs, SWDs and higher achievers. For example, in a special education math class, students were exposed to incorrect mathematical concepts, the teacher reviewed a problem to find the perimeter of a rectangle where labels were missing, in a Spanish class the teacher kept switching language code randomly and speaking at a fast pace in both languages, and in the eighth grade English class, ELLs were using StarFall software that was not grade appropriated, they completed the assigned task in a short time, no other activity was planned for them thus missed significant amount of instructional time without being cognitively engaged or approached by the teacher. These pedagogical practices hinder students' opportunities to meet their instructional targets.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

School leaders and faculty are in the process of aligning curricula to Common Core Learning Standards and content standards and integrating the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks reflect planning to provide students access to the curricula and tasks and cognitively engage a diversity of learners

Impact

Uneven integration of the instructional shifts hinders coherence in promoting college and career readiness for all students. As a result of inconsistent curricular planning and refinement, a diversity of learners, including ELLs, and SWDs do not consistently have access to the curricula, limiting their cognitive engagement.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal reported that Emolior Academy adopted and uses Common Core aligned curricula for the major content areas. During the summer of 2014 teachers created curriculum maps and unit plans for literacy, math, and content-area studies. Furthermore, all curricula is planned, shared, and reviewed in grade-level teams and teachers have clarity around year-end learning targets and are working in collaboration to ensure their instructional plan and curricula modification help lead all students towards mastery.
- Curricula maps in core content areas include strategies use to support ELLs, SWDs and higher achievers. Most teachers use a common lesson plan template that indicates the alignment to Common Core Learning Standards. For example, an eighth grade math lesson plan includes the use of SMARTboards, graphic organizers and calculators to offer multiple opportunities to students to choose tools to enhance their learning. However, planning to implement supports, scaffolds and resources available for students is emerging across classrooms.
- While the school transitions their work to align to the instructional shifts, some lesson plans emphasize higher order thinking and provide a menu of strategies or leveled resources from which scholars utilize or choose to better understand the subject matter or content areas. For example, a math lesson plan for special education students used students' data and describes in detail the purpose for each group and the expected learning outcomes. However, this practice is not consistent across subjects. As a result, there are missing opportunities to support students to build a better understanding of the subject matter.
- A review of lesson plans submitted demonstrate inconsistency to implement scaffolds and entry points to meet the needs of all learners including those performing at the highest and lowest levels. For example, during the social studies lesson, the push-in English as a second language (ESL) teacher provided a lesson plan referring to "The Sherpa People in Nepal" and the social studies lesson plan aim was "Who was China's first emperor and how did he limit the freedom of the people?" In addition, some lesson plans include detailed information of differentiation, other lesson plans revealed some detail while other lesson plans missed the differentiation component. As a result, at times, designed tasks do not always provide supports, scaffolds to ELLs as well as challenging tasks for high achieving students. In some classrooms planned tasks are the same to all students regardless of their ability level.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Teachers create and use assessments aligned to the school's curricula, yet students do not always receive actionable feedback across subject areas. Teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding, so that teachers inconsistently make effective adjustments to meet students' learning needs.

Impact

Feedback in the form of next steps for improvement is not consistent across classrooms and student work products, thus limiting student progress.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal revealed that the school value assessment data and have established systems for both ongoing formative assessment data review and summative benchmark data collection and review throughout the year and teachers provide students with meaningful feedback during instruction, portfolio work, and bulletin board work aligned to a rubric. In addition, majority of teachers are using some form of formative assessment-exit tickets, clickers, quizzes and other formative assessments and checks for understanding include discussion opportunities to listen in on student conversations to hear student thinking, in order to check for student understanding.
- Across lessons observed, checks for understanding and adjustments were inconsistent. For example, in one English language arts (ELA) class, while students worked independently using their iPads, the teacher circulated around the room and spoke with most students to ensure they were able to collect information from reliable sources, the teacher offered assistance to students as needed. However, in other classes, teachers asked questions to groups of students or to the whole class to determine if all students understood. However, the practice of annotating students' strengths and areas for improvement and adjusting the lesson based on notes recorded was not observed consistently across classes. As a result the practice of making on-the-spot adjustments to the lesson based on students' progress is inconsistent across classrooms consequently preventing students to move towards their instructional targets.
- Across classrooms visited, students receive inconsistent feedback on assessments as well as other work products. A review of student work products on classroom bulletin boards and assessments in portfolios revealed that students receive comments such as "Your introduction gets too long and it starts to sound like a body paragraph. When quoting someone as a hook, give some background information...", "Reorganize your introduction, and develop your ideas. Don't forget to mention the characteristics of 3 body paragraphs", "Please use your time more wisely, your work appears incomplete", as well as "excellent", "Great job", and "85%." During the meeting with students, they shared their work and the same pattern of feedback was observed. In addition, some portfolios showed that students involved in the program Cash4Math have the opportunity to engage in self-reflection by answering questions like, "What do you feel you did well on this assignment?", "What will you focus on improving for the next assignment" and "Describe one math skill you learned this unit that you used to complete this assignment." However, this type of sample was not available in most of the portfolios reviewed. In addition, many students' portfolios were collections of work that showed no evidence of teacher's offering actionable feedback.

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

All faculty members are engaged in professional collaborations to implement the Common Core State Standards that support the achievement of school goals, while building distributive leadership among all teachers.

Impact

The work of these professional collaborations has positively impacted student achievement and also resulted in teachers having built leadership capacity and a voice in school decisions as the school is working towards school-wide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- The Principal shared that teachers have common planning five times a week. Grade common planning and content planning happens twice a week and is embedded in teachers' schedule. In addition, the principal established the TIF Leadership Team; this team participates in the decision making progress of the Instructional Focus, professional development and strategies for targeting the Instructional Focus. In addition, the PLC was created and worked on the professional learning plan for the 2014-2015 school where professional learning for teachers is aligned to focus components of the Danielson Framework for Teaching.
- During a team meeting observed, teachers were using the Word Generation Protocol, where they were looking at the essays of two students representing specific sub-groups. Teachers were using rubrics to individually assess the essay given to them. Teachers then shared their findings and started to discuss next steps to refine the curricula to address the needs of those students and those represented in the sub-groups. In addition, teachers shared that they use the results of the Degrees of Reading Power data to modify instruction and collaborate on ideas to adjust teaching practices so that areas in need of improvement are addressed.
- The principal has established different modalities to build leadership capacity among faculty members. For example, teachers signed up to coordinate and facilitate one professional development this year based on a list of instructional topics. Also, teachers attend professional development sessions and turn-key strategies and resources to their colleagues. In addition, half of the professional development sessions are created and facilitated by teachers, in which they share best practices. Furthermore, based on strengths and interests each teacher takes some form of leadership role within the school. For example the math team designed and implemented the Cash4Math program with the approval and on-going support from the principal.
- Teachers value their common planning meetings because provides them with the opportunity to share best practices to address the needs of their students. They expressed that their team work provides a sense of professional community and felt supported by their colleagues. Teachers stated that they have a voice in key decisions, and shared that their perceptions and findings are taken into consideration. For example, members of the TIF team participate and have a voice in key instructional decisions.