

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Mount Eden Children's Academy

Elementary School X555

**1501 Jerome Avenue
Bronx
NY 10452**

Principal: Jessica Torres- Maheia

**Date of review: May 11, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Cheryl McClendon**

The School Context

Mount Eden Children's Academy is an early childhood school with 266 students from kindergarten through grade 3. The school population comprises 79% Hispanic, 20% Black, and 1% White students. The student body includes 23% English language learners and 2% 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 95.5%.

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	Proficient
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	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	Additional Findings	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	Celebration	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

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

Teacher teams systematically analyze assessment data, student work and examine key elements of teacher practice. There is a culture of distributed leadership throughout the school.

Impact

Teacher team collaboration and analysis positively affects teacher practice. Distributed leadership gives teachers a voice in key decision-making and develops teacher leaders.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal asserted that all teachers participate in teacher team meetings to analyze student work using a norming protocol that facilitates equitable participation. Horizontal teacher teams meet weekly with an assistant principal.
- During the grade 1 teacher team meeting, the presenting teacher began by describing some of her concerns about a student in her class. She expressed concerns about his penmanship, feeling that it was not commensurate with his development in other areas, such as reading at level J. The other team members then analyzed the student's writing sample and articulated the strengths that they noticed, such as uses details well, uses genre-specific words, and the sub-title matches the content. After silently listening to her team members, the presenting teacher thanked them for illuminating the student's strengths, which she stated changed her perspective and provided her with insight into next steps for the student.
- The school has many structures to support distributive leadership, such as teacher leaders, opportunities for all teachers to facilitate professional learning sessions, teacher created English as a-second language (ESL) Saturday workshops for parents, teacher hosted inter-visitations and lab-sites, and a teacher led Saturday garden club. A teacher is training to become a mentor at the New Teacher Center Mentor project.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

While teaching practices aligned to the curricula and the Danielson Framework for Teaching effect high levels of participation and critical thinking as evidenced in student work products and discussions across most classrooms, these practices are not yet apparent in a few classrooms.

Impact

Curricula-aligned teaching practices engage students and promote critical thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- In some classrooms, teachers provide scaffolds to support student comprehension during reading. Notably, in a grade 1 class the teacher instructed students to look at the pictures to get more details about the text. She also anticipated challenging vocabulary words and printed them on a chart as she led the students through a picture walk. This facilitated student comprehension as reflected by student responses and their engagement with the task. During a grade 3 guided reading lesson, the teacher began by focusing students on using the text illustrations to gather more information as she led them through a picture walk of the text. However, this teacher did not clarify the challenging vocabulary words, which students eventually struggled with as they attempted to read the text.
- Explicit teaching or modeling that clarified the teaching point was observed in some classrooms. For example, a kindergarten teacher defined the word opinion for students and then modeled writing an opinion story about her favorite animal. After the mini-lesson, she instructed the students to name their favorite sea creature and give two reasons why it is their favorite. Student responses were text-based such as, "My favorite sea creature is a dolphin because dolphins play with people and they swim really fast." Students followed the explicit model that the teacher provided. Moreover, their responses indicated immersion in informational reading. In one science classroom, however, the teaching point was not explicit although students were engaged in the hands-on exploration of fruits, seeds and flowers as the teacher called them up by table groups for tastings.
- In a grade 3 class, as students worked on adding and subtracting monetary values, the teacher posed the real world question, "Why do I need to know how to add or subtract?" One student responded, "If you don't know how, they could take all of your money." While another student gave an account of a real-life experience, in which she was short-changed by a vendor because she neglected to count her change.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that the Common Core and content standards-aligned curricula integrate key instructional shifts and make purposeful decisions to build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students. Across the grades and subjects, curricula and tasks engage all students in rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

Impact

The planning and implementation of standards-aligned curricula engages all students in rigorous habits and higher-order skills and promotes college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses the Math in Focus curriculum in kindergarten through grade 2. As the school has expanded to grade 3 this year, the assistant principal in charge of math and teacher teams made the data-informed, purposeful decision to integrate GO Math! for its comprehensive Common Core alignment and coherence, and Math in Focus for implementation in grade 3. The integrated model is slated for full implementation in 2015 - 2016.
- The New York State social studies standards provide the foundation for the social studies curriculum, which also integrates relevant Common Core standards. Unit plans reflect higher-order essential and guiding questions, recommended immersion texts, Depth of Knowledge (DOK) questions, academic vocabulary, mini-lessons, instructional scaffolds for English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, and assessments. Students receive four periods of social studies instruction per week.
- The science curriculum follows the New York State science standards and is planned and implemented by the two science teachers on staff. Students receive four periods of science instruction per week.
- The school has developed its own comprehensive Common Core aligned English language arts (ELA) curriculum, which integrates Teachers College Reading and Writing strategies and Generation Ready strategies. Each literacy unit also integrates the ESL standards and performance indicators. The curriculum utilizes readers' and writers' workshop, shared reading and writing, and independent and guided reading.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use or create curricula-aligned assessments, rubrics and grading policies that offer a clear portrait of student mastery. The school uses common assessments to create a clear picture of student progress toward goals, enabling teachers to track progress and refine instruction so that all students demonstrate increasing mastery.

Impact

The use of curricula-aligned assessments, rubrics, grading policies and common assessments facilitates the refinement of curricula and promotes increased student mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers introduce Common Core aligned, curriculum-based and content standard-aligned rubrics to students to guide them in their work. Rubrics are used to assess student work and teachers provide rubric-linked actionable feedback to students.
- The school wide grading policy delineates mastery as 80% and above in all subjects, across all grades. The policy considers any score below 70% as far below standard and 70% to 79% as approaching standard level performance.
- At the end of every week, students take a quiz in math and ELA. Students who score below 80% are expected to attend Saturday school at the end of that week to receive intervention and support in the targeted skill area. The principal shared that this program has had significant impact on student progress across the grades.
- Teachers administer performance-based unit assessments and monitor students' progress throughout each unit of study. Teacher teams track reading and math data by grade and by class. Instructional coaches and administrators track school-wide trends and teacher teams adjust instruction and curriculum, as informed by the data. Teachers administer running records to all students four times per year and more frequently, as needed. School leaders report that as of January 2015, 80% of the students are writing on or above grade level as measured by the school created Common Core aligned writing benchmark. In addition, as of March 2015, 93% of the students are reading on or above grade level as measured by Teachers College Reading and Writing Project running records and 85% of the students are performing on or above grade level in math as measured by weekly Common Core aligned performance based math assessments.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for teacher professionalism, instruction, communication and other criteria related to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, supported by effective professional learning opportunities and a system of accountability. School leaders and teachers engage in meaningful partnerships with families to support students' progress towards college and career readiness.

Impact

Teachers are well supported in meeting the expectations of school leaders through professional development. Parents are well informed about their children's progress and they are well supported.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders convey high expectations to the faculty during common planning and professional learning sessions and coaching cycles. All staff members receive frequent oral and written feedback on practice, performance and professionalism.
- The school has a differentiated professional development model, comprising three components, as follows: baseline professional development focuses on topics that are essential for all faculty members, such as the Danielson Framework for Teaching and Teacher's College running records. Differentiated professional development comprises topics in which groups of teachers are identified needing support, based upon teacher observation and student data. Building Capacity professional development covers topics such as response to intervention and gifted and talented training and is conducted for school leaders and principals, who turnkey the learning to teaching faculty. In addition, a comprehensive literacy and math professional development plan includes weekly coaching cycles comprising push-in coaching and collaborative planning. Coaching cycles are also administered in science, social studies and ESL for designated teachers.
- School leaders communicate with families through monthly newsletters, weekly "coffee with the principal" morning meetings, open houses, a parent handbook, family "fun" nights, and school messenger automated calls. During the parent meeting, parents stated that the school has an "open door" policy. The principal greets all school community members entering the building in the morning and knows all of the parents by name. Parents receive monthly progress reports and students take weekly quizzes that determine whether they will attend Saturday school at the end of the week. Parents expressed a high level of satisfaction with the communication and support that they and their children receive from the school.
- The faculty facilitates ESL training for non-English speaking parents. This supports parents in the job market as well as enhances their abilities to understand what their children are learning in school. The school offers workshops to familiarize parents with the demands of the Common Core. In addition, a guide to understanding student report card grades is issued to families every year.