



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

East New York Middle School of Excellence

Middle School K678

**605 Shepherd Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11208**

Principal: Malik Small

**Date of review: February 23, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Claudette Essor**

The School Context

East New York Middle School of Excellence is a middle school with 260 students from grade 6 through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 4% Asian, 60% Black, 36% Hispanic, and 0% White students. The student body includes 5% English Language Learners and 23% students with disabilities. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 92.2%.

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 <i>Framework for Teaching</i> , 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	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 consistently communicate high expectations for learning to all families and school staff and implement support systems to help them work with students to meet the expectations. School leaders hold staff accountable for meeting high expectations for teaching and learning across the school.

Impact

Consistent communication of and support for high expectations for all staff and students, along with ongoing communication with students' families, contribute to accountability for learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, school leaders establish high expectations for staff and student learning and provide all teachers with off-site and/or school-based professional development support to help them meet the expectations. A "Teacher Resource Book", bulletins and newsletters specify expectations related to instruction, professional development and other areas of school operations. A calendar of professional learning events indicates that all teachers receive training in using data to drive instruction, differentiating tasks, scaffolding instruction, assessing learning during instruction, parallel teaching in rooms with more than one teacher, and guided release of lesson activities to foster student ownership of learning. Teachers also reported that they are expected to improve student engagement via high-level questioning and discussion in all content areas.
- A review of school documents and conversations with staff members indicate that school leaders constantly reinforce high expectations for all members of the school community through discussions at faculty conferences and at grade and department meetings. During the teacher team meetings, teachers stated that a professional learning team that includes Generation Ready and Achievement Network (ANet) consultants, school leaders and a school based instructional coach, provides them with training in Common Core instructional shifts, as well as in strategies for teaching students with disabilities and English as a New Language (ENL) students. Teachers noted that they share best practices through videos of lessons in peers' classrooms and collaborative study of best practices from *Teach Like a Champion 2.0*. Through regular participation in teacher team meetings and daily visits to classrooms, school leaders hold teachers accountable for meeting all expectations.
- Parents who attended the meeting with families reported that members of staff conference with them about their children's progress towards graduation requirements and high school application steps. Other events such as "Breakfast with the Principal" and in-classroom activities by families who are Learning Leaders, further contribute to families' understanding of expectations for their children. Report cards, interim progress reports, student-led conferences, emails, telephone calls, texts, parent-teacher conferences, and the Skedula online data system keep all families informed about their children's progress. Packets of information, observation of instruction in classes and workshops on topics such as literacy, math and standardized assessments, provide additional information on college and career readiness expectations and connect families to resources for helping their children meet requirements for their next grade.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Instruction consistently incorporates scaffolds for learning by all students. However, lessons do not consistently facilitate peer-to-peer questioning and high level discussions across classrooms and student work products do not reflect high levels of thinking across content areas and grades.

Impact

Students have limited opportunities to participate in peer-to-peer dialogue with student-led questioning that deepens their learning across grades and content areas. Instructional practices do not consistently result in all students demonstrating higher order thinking in their work products.

Supporting Evidence

- A math teacher facilitated small group work that required students in an Integrated Co-teaching (ICT) class to work with peers in solving linear equations. The teacher distributed a task card with differentiated problems for each group and students worked with peers to determine the correct answer to each problem. Guided by focus questions on the group's task card, a student facilitator, presenter, summarizer and recorder kept peers on task as they shared strategies and rationales for their problem solving activities. A similar approach was used in another math class, where students self-selected differentiated tasks from a choice board with a menu of tasks that allowed them to use real world tasks, such as shopping and baking, to explore relationships between unit cost, unit rate, ratios and quantity. In some of the other classrooms visited, all students worked on the same task, with no variations for learners at diverse levels.
- Among the classrooms visited, few lessons offered opportunities for high-level peer to peer discussions among students. In an ICT class, the teacher used a video clip and excerpts of text to engage students in a discussion of historical information about interactions between Marcus Garvey and white supremacists. With support from adults, guiding questions and graphic organizers with writing prompts, students engaged in a lively discussion in small groups across the room. By contrast, in another ICT class, discussion emerged mainly as a brief turn and talk between some partners. Although seated in groups, some students said very little. Additionally, the practice of inviting students to comment on responses by peers during discussion was not evident across the classrooms visited.
- Some lessons challenge students to use academic vocabulary and cite evidence from texts to justify their responses to critical thinking tasks. In an ICT class, the teacher provided students with a graphic organizer and a list of many complex character traits and asked them to select words that describe characters that they had read about in the current unit. With support from several adults in the room, students helped each other make connections between the chosen trait words and evidence and shared their rationales. Tasks assigned in other classrooms visited made few demands on students, some of whom copied notes from an interactive whiteboard or handout to their notebooks to answer "right there" questions. This was the case in a class where, after the teacher used an interactive whiteboard to present information and pictures of fish to illustrate how features of fish help them to survive in a given environment, students ended up drawing and labeling parts of a fish by simply copying the drawing and text from the whiteboard on a handout given to them.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Staff members work collaboratively to further develop curricula across content areas, in alignment to Common Core Learning Standards. Using student work and data, teachers refine curricula and tasks for diverse learners.

Impact

All students have access to curricula and tasks designed to cognitively engage them in learning. Curricula, aligned to relevant content standards and instructional shifts, contribute to college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Using the Atlas Rubicon online curriculum mapping tool, teachers create and share curricula and tasks for units of instruction that integrate curriculum themes and Common Core Learning Standards across disciplines. Unit plans indicate that writing in all genres has been a common thread for instruction across grades and content areas, including foreign language, music and math. Content and skills from a math textbook drive instruction in math and *EngageNY* resources supplement curricula for math instruction across all grades. New York State scope and sequence curricula are infused in units of instruction in science and humanities, which are further supported by textbooks and novels for each grade. A variety of workbooks add content aimed at strengthening alignment of tasks to applicable Common Core Learning Standards, especially in English Language Arts (ELA) and math.
- A schoolwide focus on literacy-based activities across the curriculum drives the design of tasks that are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts and expose students to college and career readiness skills. In addition to units of instruction for day-to-day core content classes, there are tasks linked to units of instruction in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) that extend science curricula offerings for students. Technology-based tasks such as coding, video gaming, creation of apps and robotics, offer students access to learning activities that promote college and career readiness. Community service tasks and after-school program activities, including sports and the arts, provide exposure to tasks that further build college and career readiness skills for students.
- Unit plans show topics to be covered, targeted standards, skills, short and long term learning targets, texts, essential questions, assessments, sample tasks, and scaffolding and differentiation strategies. Using data and work samples for all learners, including ENL students and students with disabilities, teachers create and re-shape lesson units to incorporate supports for diverse learners. This includes infusion of tiered vocabulary, use of varied graphic organizers, and emphasis on differentiated tasks, including student-selected tasks. A unit task for students in grade 7 required students to analyze differentiated nonfiction selections and use varied graphic organizers cite evidence to illustrate their understanding of the impact of Islam on West Africa and factors that led to Africans being enslaved. Student portfolios show responses to tasks that indicate similar use of varied tools and approaches to support all students in completing tasks such as argumentative and informational essays in ELA, explanations of problem solving steps in math and reports of investigations in science and other disciplines.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use assessments, aligned with school curricula, to provide actionable feedback about student achievement. Using common assessments, teachers evaluate student progress and implement instructional adjustments based on identified learning needs.

Impact

Teachers' effective use of data to provide students and other staff with actionable feedback results in a shared understanding of student progress towards mastery of learning goals and contributes to instructional adjustments to accelerate student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders presented assessment folders containing “Mastery Trackers” and “Assessment Data Analysis Reports” by class and school, which illustrate ongoing monitoring of student growth in proficiency on performance tasks in ELA and math. ANet baseline and interim assessments in ELA, math and science allow teachers to evaluate student progress on tasks across content areas and grade levels, and teachers embed pre-assessments, projects, and end-of-unit tests in unit plans for all grades and content areas. Based on their findings, teachers implement adjustments to curricula and instructional approaches. For example, given that students are at diverse levels of proficiency within classrooms, teachers use assessment data to inform the design of differentiated tasks via choice boards that allow students to select tasks for group or individual work in class.
- Teachers use a schoolwide grading policy, aligned to curricula, and a variety of rubrics, including task specific rubrics, to generate “Glow” and “Grow” feedback about student performance on tasks in all disciplines. On one work sample, the “Glow” commended the student for “creating a clear research question” and the “Grow” advised the student to “re-write the hypothesis, using an If.... then... format”. Further, while some feedback seen on student work consisted of the teacher only circling portions of the rubric and briefly referencing suggested next steps for the student to improve the work, all students interviewed during the meeting with students were able to state what they needed to do to move the work to the next level on the applicable rubric, based on the feedback on the work that they displayed.
- Led by school leaders and an instructional coach who also serves as a data specialist, all teachers participate in data meetings where they complete data analysis logs. The logs document progress towards student mastery of targeted skills and identify areas for intervention and enrichment. Team meeting agendas and minutes show teacher use of item skills analysis of assessment data to further gauge student progress and identify areas to target for re-teaching. Teacher team meeting records reflect adjustments such as incorporation of online resources to further support all students towards improved levels of mastery, implementation of flexible instructional groupings and creation and revision of learning goals for students. Teachers noted that additional class level assessments, including on-demand writing tasks, are currently being generated to add data for further determining areas of proficiency and gaps in student learning across grades and content areas.

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

Teams of teachers meet regularly to analyze their instructional practices and develop strategies for improving staff and student achievement. Distributed leadership structures support teacher leadership.

Impact

Through extensive teamwork and distributive leadership supports, all teachers regularly reflect on their pedagogy and have a voice in decisions about teaching and learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- All staff members participate in regularly scheduled team meetings across grades and departments. Records of team meetings show a variety of professional development activities that occur weekly, including data meetings, collaborative analysis of samples of student work from units taught and common planning meetings that allow all teachers to collaborate on lesson and unit plans and content-specific strategies to improve instruction across content areas and grades. The principal noted that these activities continue to improve teacher practice, as measured by observation data showing an increasing number of teachers improving in engaging students in learning. Team activities also contribute to improvement in student achievement, as measured by an increased percentage of students making progress towards learning targets linked to iterations of ANet interim assessments.
- During the Quality Review, a teacher team analyzed samples of grade 8 students' writing at three levels of proficiency (high, medium and low) based on students' responses to a performance task that required them to write an essay comparing and contrasting the contributions of Booker T. Washington and W.E. DuBois, in African American history. They compared findings from the task with criteria from a comparative essay rubric, to gain a deeper understanding of each student's mastery level and individual needs. The participants identified strengths and weaknesses in each work sample, charted features that distinguished the high from the other two levels of performance and determined next steps for the presenting teacher to teach/re-teach to improve the students' proficiency in "elaborating on ideas". Recommended next steps included the addition of differentiated Venn Diagrams, incorporating a concept map and embedding writing prompts in a graphic organizer to push students to elaborate more on their points.
- Several teachers serve as grade leaders, peer mentors, and/or members of schoolwide teams, such as the school leadership team, school implementation team and attendance team. With staff serving in positions such as dean, special education program coordinator, instructional coach, director of student support services and guidance counselors, there are additional opportunities for staff participation in shared leadership across the school. In these roles, teacher leaders collaborate with administrators to develop and implement academic priorities, including the selection of instructional resources for all grades and content areas. They also work directly with other teachers on professional development plans, including setting up schedules for intervisitations and facilitating specialized training for staff, including instructional aides (paraprofessionals). All teachers also hone their leadership skills by taking turns in leading Monday meetings where they share best practices with peers.