



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

East Side Elementary School, PS 267

Elementary School M267

**213 East 63rd Street
Manhattan
NY 10065**

Principal: Medea McEvoy

**Date of review: January 15, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Debra Freeman**

The School Context

East Side Elementary School, PS 267 is an elementary school with 363 students from grade kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 11% Asian, 2% Black, 7% Hispanic, and 78% White students. The student body includes 4% English Language Learners and 17% students with disabilities. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 95.8%.

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	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 <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	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	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

All teachers consistently engage in structured professional collaborations that strengthen their practice and promote Common Core implementation. All teams engage in systematic data-informed decision making based on student work and reflections on practice.

Impact

Teams' in-depth focus on task rigor and improving instructional practices result in school-wide instructional coherence. Teachers' consistent analysis of their work and student outcomes results in improved practices and students mastering goals.

Supporting Evidence

- In the second grade team meeting observed, teachers looked at written work of three students using a rubric to note strengths and weaknesses aligned to narrative writing criteria in leads, transitions, ending, and organization. They identified strengths for each student that ranged from a creative lead, organized use of elaborative techniques, and trying out an approach from the mentor text. Next, the team sorted their findings and referred to their data binders for unit pre-assessment outcomes for each student. The work for individual students would address: missed information; unclear changes from setting to setting; or varying introduction techniques. This led to a discussion of broader instructional adjustments to collectively address such as: past versus present tense; balancing dialogue and narrative; and effective use of mentor texts.
- One of the foci of the fourth and fifth grade team is to teach students to give each other feedback for improved writing or math computations. Teachers agreed to bring students into the process to generate ideas for defining helpful feedback. They posed questions such as, "What would help my partner be a better mathematician?" Evidence of this work lined halls and classrooms where students offered feedback such as: "I liked how you used fruit to get your answer, but maybe next time you could check your numbers to make sure they are in the correct places." Additionally, the team discussed how, "after two to three conferences around a particular strategy", students might lead their own small groups.
- Grade team meeting minutes reflected work to support a targeted group of students in the lowest third. The team reviewed current interventions to surface gaps as they prepared for their informational writing unit. They agreed to modify "Bend 2 and 3," to focus on the unit's mentor text, and to reconsider their read aloud to better meet student need. They created a new checklist to support writers in three areas: elaboration, transitions, and editing for conventions. In a follow up meeting, teachers considered checklists in current use, and whether they might be available to their targeted group during performance tasks. Additionally, the team agreed to create a feedback tracker for students, group students according to assessment outcomes in four areas: introductions, conclusions, elaboration, transitions, and created a fifth group for students who mastered the four skills successfully to "bring out writer's voices." Teachers shared their appreciation for the "freedom" to modify curricula to "serve our students."

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices strategically provide multiple entry points into challenging tasks and curricula for all students. Student work products and discussions reflect higher order thinking and participation.

Impact

As a result of strategic teaching practices, students demonstrate higher-order thinking in work products and discussions. However, less consistent were students fully owning their learning and pushing each other's thinking in collaborative discussions and work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Students worked with manipulatives in a third grade math class to figure out how to arrange truffles on a baker's single-layer rectangular box. Students shared approaches and in building on each other's responses learned the best method from each other. One student doubled, "I started with 12 truffles and doubled to 24, so I wouldn't have so many numbers to multiply." This prompted a second student to add that he doubled to 48, and a third realized, "If you can do that why not 96, you can just keep on doubling?" Although the task was differentiated so that students with stronger multiplication skills were given higher numbers with more factors, and pairs with similar skill worked together, the share out offered all students access to thinking across ability levels. Students reflected at the close of the lesson: "What patterns are you starting to notice about the different amounts of truffles and the number of possible box arrangements?"
- During reading time, fourth graders worked in small skill-based groups. For one, the teacher modeled using the "Somebody Wanted, But, So" chart to help students strengthen their retelling skill. When circulating, the teacher posed questions such as: "Can you find a spot in your notebook where you are writing about theme and meeting this goal?" She encouraged students to interact with each other: "You don't need me to teach you, you can teach each other." In a peer conference, she encouraged partners to touch the "learning progression" chart to "name that for your partner," and then pointed to posted instructions for "how to peer conference." One student who was reading *Freedom Crossing* independently stopped to reference an informational text. She shared that when she read that the slave's papa taught his son to read and write, it made her wonder what other things slaves learned and from whom. This aligned to one of the stated reading goals: to "read texts alongside your novel – texts that add background knowledge."
- In a second grade science class, students engaged in a multi-stepped process for learning about gravity, magnetism, and mechanical forces using "zoomers." All students enjoyed the challenge - how to put their zoomer in motion and keep it spinning. Though some students had a difficult start, by paying attention to each other, they caught on. Not one student gave up. In a kindergarten math class, students were instructed to figure out how many ways they could create a hexagon using rhombus, trapezoid, and triangle "magnatiles." The teacher presented this as a problem: how to "make butterfly wings even more beautiful." Although in both classrooms, the opportunity to strategize collaboratively and push each other's thinking were in place, most students worked independently while in groups, and when they did learn from each other, it was not because it was planned for or an expectation.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

All curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

The school's rigorous curricula establish school-wide instructional coherence and prepare all students for high school and beyond. All students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, have access to curricula and are cognitively engaged in their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- In a fifth grade lesson, students analyzed the Bill of Rights for evidence of the beliefs of the United States government. To build on prior knowledge, students recorded and shared their rights in triads in response to: What things are you free to do in this country? This prepared them to compare or contrast their lists to the language in the Bill of Rights. For added support, students were provided with a set of techniques that “writers of informational texts use” such as: repeat parallelism; quoting an authority; or giving examples and anecdotes, and student-friendly summaries. The student-led “congress” that ensued amply provided opportunities for all students to demonstrate their thinking. One student shared that learning this is important because “we are going to have a new president, so we may need new laws,” and another shared that it “helps us to know what it means to be a country.”
- The school implements a variety of Common Core-aligned curricula emphasizing literacy across content areas. Teachers continuously make adjustments to units after analyzing assessment data and looking at student work. After analyzing post-assessment data for the third grade “Muffles Truffles” unit, the team noticed gaps in students’ understanding of distributive property in multiplication. To address this, the team designed a “mini investigation focused on the distributive property with an area model.” Additionally, the unit now includes a mid-unit assessment to gauge progress for preselecting student group cycles, and a focus on more discussion in mathematics. The second grade team revised their fiction writing unit after assessment data revealed that students needed more explicit instruction in transitions, introductions, and development. The revised unit now includes writing stations to teach small action, dialogue, and expressing feeling or thought, and techniques for keeping the readers “on the edge of their seat.”
- Rigorous tasks were in evidence in several classrooms and, during the student meeting, students shared their research projects on self-selected topics from how to make a cupcake to analysis of the Gold Rush. One student was interested in the Gold Rush “because people really changed in that period.” The school’s literacy focus crosses all content areas; the science teacher shared that he has learned to embed reading and writing in his curricula with great success. As a culminating task for the historical fiction unit, students learn to craft historical fiction pieces using the many techniques they have engaged in and practiced over the course of several weeks, from creating characters who face conflict and authentic settings, to making certain that what they write “rings true for the time period.”

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school uses common assessments to consistently track and create a clear picture of student progress toward goals across grades and subjects. Teacher assessment practices consistently reflect varied use of ongoing checks for understanding and opportunities for student to assess their progress.

Impact

Teachers consistently adjust their instruction and curricula so that all students demonstrate mastery, and understand their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers regularly assess student learning using pre- and post- unit assessments, on-demand writing, running records, and math interviews to gauge student progress toward goals, and areas for additional support. Criteria for moving up a level are made clear to all students in learning progressions, rubrics, and a variety of checklists across grades and subjects. The Narrative Reading Learning Progression indicates exemplar writing for what “inferring about characters and story elements” looks like at a grade three, four and five. In the student meeting, all students understood why they used rubrics: “for putting us in groups by level”; “to help you see what you did well”; to “tell us what we need to learn more about.” One student shared that his teacher “adds a sixth-grade level on our rubric, and it kind of gets us ready for the future.” Another shared he sees the rubric criteria for two levels above his to push his progress. A student realized that “I had a fourth grade answer because I misunderstood the relationship between two texts. I thought it was compare and contrast.”
- Teachers assess student learning during class using entry and exit slips, turn and talks, and tracking progress toward targeted goals or skills. All teachers maintain conferring notes while either listening into group discussions or in one-on-one conferences with individual students. Such practices were evident across classrooms. In a reading class, the teacher checked in with two students to monitor progress on their “stamina” goals, and then worked individually with several students taking notes as they read aloud. All lesson plans include a “mid-workshop interruption” as in a math lesson where the teacher noted that she would “pull out two pieces of student work to share with the whole class” as a check for understanding. At a pause in an English Language Arts class, the teacher asked students to share what they learned from one text in order to decide if this “fits with what I already knew, or adds to what I already knew.”
- Teachers keep multiple trackers that indicate student progress in skill areas such as “paraphrasing chunks and putting them together” and “consistently asking, how do I know?” A Narrative Checklist that has gone through several revisions now includes student-friendly criteria for transitions and mechanics. In a kindergarten math interview tracker, the teacher collects information on how well students can, for example, count from a given number or count backwards. Conferring notes also capture students’ success: “always tries out what was taught in the mini lesson” or “jumps right in to solve tricky words.” Trackers to collect information on students meeting skill-based goals were evident across the school, and all students self-assess their progress on rubrics and checklists and readily articulate their next steps.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school leader consistently communicates high expectations and provides training to all staff. Families receive ongoing communication regarding expectations connected to a path of college and career readiness.

Impact

As a result of high levels of communication, teachers hold themselves accountable for meeting high expectations, and the school successfully partners with parents to support student progress.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers consistently work to make curricular and instructional decisions to meet the needs of their students. The principal shared that she empowers teachers to take risks, and not to be “crushed” by high expectations. Instead, she encourages her teachers to find a balance between high expectations and building trust. She maintains stringent hiring protocols and many teachers volunteer to be a part of the hiring committee. This requires long hours after school, but as the principal noted, they want to be a part of selecting the professional they will work with and learn from. They see entering teachers as collaborators on their team, who will be as committed as they are to supporting all students in achieving their goals. This commitment creates a culture of high expectations for which all teachers and school leaders take part. The principal stated that she wants teachers to feel valued, and this is the most “important part of my job, and why they stay.”
- The principal noted that when a teacher “comes on board” it is made clear that involvement in ongoing professional learning is the culture of the school, and an expectation that all staff meet. A school-based math coach, Teachers College staff developers, and a Metamorphosis consultant all support teachers in curricular and instructional planning. Teachers hold themselves accountable for their students’ progress by continuously looking at student work and adjusting curricula and practice so that all students make progress. The principal regularly reviews all data trackers in discussions with teachers, and parents shared that this level of commitment and availability on the part of teachers and school leaders helps them to support their children in meeting the high academic standards set. One parent commented on the “amazing” work of the dual team teachers in supporting her child with disabilities.
- Parents expressed appreciation for the strong teachers who “engage our kids” and their ongoing communication via monthly newsletters, updates on the website, flyers, notes, emails, and phone calls from teachers that keep them abreast of upcoming curricula and student progress. Homework packets indicate tasks that parents are to be a part of such as: family interviews for research, and content vocabulary review. This engages parents in their children’s learning at home. When there was concern over the third grade test, teachers and parents unpacked the expectations together to dispel any notion that there would be a focus on test prep. “We see an obvious progression to prepare them for middle school. My fifth grader is delving into sixth grade work.” Additionally, students noted that they are aware of what work looks like one grade up from theirs.