Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Eugenio Maria De Hostos Intermediate School

Middle School K318

101 Walton Street
Brooklyn
NY 11206

Principal: Leander E. Windley

Date of review: March 23, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Alicja Winnicki
Eugenio Maria De Hostos is an intermediate school with 1607 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 17% Black, 62% Hispanic, 14% White, and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 95.0%.

### School Quality Criteria

#### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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#### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
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<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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#### Systems for Improvement

<table>
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<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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Area of Celebration

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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Findings
School leaders and teachers have established a culture for learning centered at the development of the young adult ready for next steps. They consistently communicate clear and high expectations for instruction and systematically promote strategies to engage families in the school decisions and improvements.

Impact
Structures for intensified professional development have resulted in teachers’ success in working towards the instructional goals to increase student engagement and ownership for their academic experience, thus preparing them for college and careers. Strong emphasis on parent involvement leads to a thriving partnership between the school and families who have a heightened awareness of their role in supporting their children’s progress towards meeting the school’s high expectations.

Supporting Evidence
- The administration provides all teachers with a robust professional development program, trainings and coaching so that all pedagogues can successfully meet their professional goals and hone their instructional skills. The principal and his cabinet ensure that teachers have extensive opportunities to participate in study groups, inter-class and inter-school visitations through partnerships with the Middle School Quality Initiative (MSQI) and district schools. All content area departments are immersed in professional studies and discussions about successful instructional strategies for engaging students in learning. The English language arts (ELA) department, for example, examines a research based growth mindset to reinforce and sustain teaching practices grounded in high expectations and student motivation for hard work.

- Classroom observations, followed up with detailed feedback and aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, hold staff accountable for meeting high expectations for improving instruction and implementing strategies from professional learning.

- Families have an easy access to monitoring their children’s achievement through the web-based Jupiter Grades program teachers use to provide feedback on student progress towards meeting the grade level benchmarks. Parents express that the school prepares their children for next levels by promoting student-led discussions, reading and writing informational text, establishing high standards for participation in extracurricular and enrichment programs, and the implementation of the Common Core programs. They regularly receive information regarding these high expectations from grade level and subject teachers via newsletters, direct emails, workshops, and visits to school.

- The principal exemplifies an open door policy and leads communication efforts with the parents and students. His administrative team provides a forum for developing the common language of academic expectations through young adult literature in school-wide book clubs and frequent discussions with students. Similarly, the principal also promotes and supports parent-initiated weekly chats: gatherings where families have opportunities to discuss with the leadership various educational topics, including next steps in progress toward school expectations, and give feedback. Parents are also welcome to lead workshops, apply for grants and make recommendations to offer new programs for students such as the one in nutrition or an annual book swap.
Area of Focus

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
Across classrooms teachers routinely use common assessments, embedded in the grading policy, to monitor student academic progress towards goals and provide feedback. Deliberate use of assessments to track identified students’ progress differs across grades and subjects.

Impact
The use of rubrics and other periodic assessments results in adjusting instructional decisions regarding student achievement. However, there are some missed opportunities to provide specific and meaningful feedback to guide all students toward the mastery of grade level goals.

Supporting Evidence
- The school uses common assessments in all subject areas, such as performance based assessments and rubrics in writing and projects, and unit assessments across content areas which provide information on student progress and measure performance growth. For example, Grade 7 social studies teachers use rubrics to score student-created board games intended to demonstrate student knowledge about the government. These rubrics assess the presentation of the project as well as ability to articulate concepts. Teachers write strengths and steps for improvement as their actionable feedback. Similarly, science teachers use project evaluation rubrics assessing investigation design, research and detailed explanation of data collection for experiments.

- All ELA teachers assess students with the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) periodically and use the results to group students for the strategic reading period determined by a reading level. Additionally, students who score below the grade level benchmark are re-assessed more frequently to monitor progress and to prescribe specific academic interventions, such as the Wilson or Rewards program and to help them meet the grade level goals via meeting identified needs.

- Although teachers consistently monitor their students’ progress through the administration of benchmark and unit tests and other periodic assessments, this information and data are not always intentionally used to provide actionable and meaningful feedback to students regarding their next steps. In one class, for example, a teacher indicated on rubrics the areas students were successful with and then provided next steps for consideration, such as to “only include true or factual information for your explanation of how you arrived at solving the problem.” In another class, a teacher only highlighted the areas of mastery without providing specific feedback for improvement.
### Additional Findings

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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#### Findings

Instructional shifts are strategically embedded in the curricula that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and content standards across grade levels and disciplines. Academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order thinking.

#### Impact

Curricula and tasks are planned to inspire and challenge thinking of diverse learners, including special education and high achieving students, thus positioning them for college and career readiness and resulting in coherence across grades and subjects.

#### Supporting Evidence

- Word Generation, a component of the MSQI, is purposefully embedded across content areas in the 6th and 7th grade curriculum to intentionally integrate academic vocabulary in the context of reading and responding to informational text. Teachers utilize this program to plan for student engagement opportunities through high interest topics, a Socratic seminar and weekly debates. They also supplement the Common Core ELA program, the *Expeditionary Learning*, with leveled non-fiction literature and current events articles.

- The school offers an abundance of advanced, accelerated and enrichment curricula for all students to choose from and to further promote college and career readiness. For example, the 8th grade curriculum offers Regents courses in Integrated Algebra, Living Environment and the U.S. History and Government. Teachers incorporate research based projects in this coursework. Similarly, Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) curriculum is purposefully integrated with grade level math and science curricula and includes computer coding and robotics as components of rigorous tasks within computer science, in addition to problem solving and conducting research or experiments that drive project-based learning in the school’s science and social studies curricula. Teachers promote the code.org website for additional tasks in technology integration for better college and career readiness for all students. All learners, including English language learners and special education students showcase their findings in the school’s annual Science Fair teachers plan across grade levels and as part of the Regents classes.

- Unit and lesson plans indicate multiple designs of challenging tasks with numerous scaffolds and entry points for all students, including high achievers and special education students. For example, math lesson plans include a choice of differentiated tasks for diverse learners, with prompts or questions for demonstrating higher order thinking and conceptual understanding requiring explanation or determining and proving answers, visuals for identified learners and challenge problems to encourage productive struggle. Similarly, social studies lesson plans include inquiry questions leading to debates in a Socratic seminar setting with partnerships planned for student-to-student discourse and opportunities for all students to ask “burning” questions.

- Teachers across grades and contents plan challenging, higher order questions and tasks and purposefully embed rigorous habits as evident in unit and lesson plans and in classroom visits. Teaching perseverance in pursuing answers, listening with understanding and respect for a speaker, motivating student questioning and remaining open to the opinion of others are continuously emphasized in performance tasks for all students.
Quality Indicator: 1.2 Pedagogy  
Rating: Proficient

Findings
The Danielson Framework for Teaching, instructional shifts and school goals inform the common beliefs about how students learn best. Across classrooms students have ample opportunities to engage in problem solving and conversations about tasks.

Impact
Teaching practices, aligned to the curricula and guided by the Danielson Framework reflect the school’s efforts to increase student engagement, resulting in raised levels of student participation and thinking demonstrated in discussions and work products.

Supporting Evidence
- Intellectual engagement and shifting to student-centered instruction drives teacher teams and school leaders in their constant professional discussions about how students learn best. Challenging students to explain their thinking in problem solving and providing opportunities to discuss different points of view underpin the school’s shared understanding of student engagement. ELA and social studies teachers, for example, implement a Socratic seminar and provide ongoing opportunities for debating and arguing opinions and high interest topics, as observed in class visits.

- Conversations with teachers revealed that the school’s instructional focus, centered on elevating student engagement in discussions and questioning within the school’s rigorous curriculum, has solidified the school’s beliefs that all diverse students can learn when challenged to show their thinking and proof their opinion points. Teachers also say that the school’s push for deepening the intellectual work with students has increased the rigor of their questioning practices.

- In most classrooms visited, students participated in group or partner discussions. Students shared that they have regular opportunities to work in groups in all content areas. They commonly debate their points of view or argue the impact of decisions made by world leaders. They also said that teachers give them choice and opportunities to participate in book club discussions. In one 6th grade ELA class, all students lively discussed novels of their choice in literature circles and asked and answered questions giving textual evidence while a teacher kept pushing their thinking through making connection to visual representations, song lyrics, or video clips related to literature the groups were reading.

- In a social studies class, all students, including English language learners and special education students participated in a weekly debate arguing their viewpoint and supporting it with textual evidence. They also shared their thinking with the rest of the class at the conclusion of the lesson.

- A review of student work across grades and subjects in their portfolios and on bulletin boards reflects high levels of critical thinking in argumentative and opinion writing, analysis of informational text or in making thinking and strategizing visible to solve mathematical or science problems and tasks. All students are challenged to demonstrate critical and analytical thinking skills by showing deep understanding of concepts supported by evidence in their claims as evident in math tasks across the grades. In science, students apply their scientific observations and hands-on explorations to arrive at results and conclusions. In Grade 6 class, students made predictions based on their observations of simple machines, charted their conclusions and presented results to the class.
**Quality Indicator:** 4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development  
**Rating:** Proficient

**Findings**
The majority of teachers are engaged in regularly scheduled professional collaborations and analysis of student work. The systematic inquiry leading to improvement of teacher practices differs from team to team.

**Impact**
Teacher teams work collaboratively to plan the alignment of units and lessons with the Common Core Learning Standards and to engage in professional study groups. Likewise they consistently analyze common assessment results and student outcomes. Yet, they sometimes miss opportunities to anchor the work towards student mastery of goals in their strengthened teacher instructional capacity.

**Supporting Evidence**
- Teacher teams are structured horizontally by grade levels and vertically by content area departments, including a team of academic interventions teachers. These structures support teacher work in analysis of student assessment results, planning units of study, and discussing identified learning gaps. Teachers also utilize these collaborative opportunities to share differentiated tasks and projects they create for groups of students. Additionally they spend common planning time on integrating instructional shifts, such as conceptual understanding in math, in to their units and lessons.

- Teachers say they have many opportunities to participate in professional learning via a study of strategies like a Socratic seminar to boost student engagement in discussions, or by working with an MSQI coach to improve practices supporting the achievement of school goals. One study group, for example, focuses on a theme, bringing words to life, so that teachers can continuously enhance their capacity with the implementation of new approaches and shared practices. Science teachers also share that leaders support them with professional development in science inquiry through a partnership with outside organizations.

- Grade 6 ELA teacher team analyzed student work and performance in writing a literary essay. Teachers discussed student writing against differentiated tasks for visual learners and other learning modalities. They also made noticing about students’ use of self-assessment tools that one teacher researched for this team. Other teachers shared their strategies to support struggling writers, such as peer review or the process of elaboration. This team identified a gap in citing textual evidence and made recommendations for instruction to use graphic organizers, plan an outline, and frontload vocabulary.

- While teachers regularly meet in teams to look at student work from common assessments and analyze results to determine academic growth or a need for flexible grouping or interventions, the regular use of protocols for looking at student work to monitor progress towards grade level goals varies across teams. One team, for example, discussed strengths and struggles of identified students in their writing and shared strategies to improve student work. Even though the teachers talked about implications for instruction and expectations, they only briefly discussed the mastery and progress toward goals for groups of students.