Quality Review Report
2014-2015

Medgar Evers College Preparatory
Middle-High School K590
1186 Carroll Street
Brooklyn
NY 11225

School Building Leader: Angella Smith
Date of review: May 18, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Shenean N. Lindsay
The School Context

Medgar Evers College Preparatory School is a middle-high school with 1,271 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 90% Black, 4% Hispanic, 1% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 0% English language learners and 1% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 97.3%.

School Quality Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.1</strong> 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>Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<td><strong>1.2</strong> 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>Well Developed</td>
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<td><strong>2.2</strong> 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>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<th>School Culture</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<td><strong>3.4</strong> Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<th>Systems for Improvement</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<td><strong>4.2</strong> Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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**Findings**

Rigorous habits and higher order skills are emphasized coherently in the school-wide curricula and academic tasks. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

**Impact**

Curricula and tasks lead students to demonstrate higher order thinking skills and foster a connection to the content to engage all learners cognitively.

**Supporting Evidence**

- A review of teacher lesson plans across grades and subject areas shows tasks such as students using technology and reading complex texts to synthesize, analyze, summarize, compare/contrast, infer, and interpret information from many sources. For example, lesson plans from a seventh grade living environment class indicate opportunities for question and discussion. A grade six math lesson plan provided opportunities for students to assess one another through questioning.

- Rigorous habits and higher order skills are emphasized in the curricula and academic tasks using the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) tool as a reference. One teacher stated, “When we create lesson plans, we look at the DOK level. We use those words to create our lesson plans so we know we are doing rigorous work with students.” For example, in a sixth grade science lesson plan, sample questions included, “What is the number one environmental problem in the United States? Explain how an increase in population has contributed to pollution.” In an Advanced Placement (AP) English language arts (ELA) lesson, questions such as “State the author’s argument using evidence from the text” was included.

- A review of teacher lesson plans and curricula across all grades indicate refinements and groupings based on data. The school building leader stated, “Regents results are used to program students for classes. Those who score well receive accelerated work and those who don’t perform as well are accelerated on their grade level.” This was evident when reviewing lesson plans across subjects. For example, a sixth grade ELA lesson plan provided opportunities for students to work in groups. A math lesson plan reveals activities where students use videos and conduct group work. A ninth grade science lesson plan shows opportunities for students to work in groups as well as create questions for one another based on ability.
Area of Focus

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
Across the school, teacher teams consistently conduct structured, inquiry-based collaborations, and share teaching strategies yet, systematic elements of this work are in the beginning phases. Structures are in place to allow teachers a voice in key decisions but have yet to embed effective teacher leadership.

Impact
Improved teacher practice has yet to result in shared improvements in pedagogy and mastery of goals for groups of students. Leadership capacity has yet to be maximized in order for teacher leaders to play an integral role on key decisions that affect student learning.

Supporting Evidence
- Teacher teams develop structures including agendas, tuning protocols, minutes, and supplemental materials. The focus of these meetings consists of inquiry-based work across subject areas analyzing data such as performance tasks, practice Regents, and looking at student work. The school building leader and department chairperson work with teacher team members to determine the focus of the meetings. As a result of learning a strategy such as Overview, Parts of the picture, Title, Inter-relationships, and Conclusion (OPTIC) Method of Visual Analysis, teachers use this new instructional strategy for teaching students paraphrasing. Teachers share other strategies such as questioning and summarizing and discuss how they could be applied during lessons. One teacher felt the OPTIC strategies would be a good idea in his global studies class because cartoons and quotes are often discussed.

- Department chairs are included in the instructional cabinet, which meets once a week and determines the instructional focus and professional development for teachers. For example, the vertical teacher team focuses on writing across the content areas. They review student work relative to target standards, and determine student readiness for taking Regents exams and beginning college-level instruction. One teacher stated, “We learn from one another. Someone will share something and we try it ourselves.” Upon review of teacher team documents, the evidence shows these groups began meeting during the spring semester to establish protocols, review student work, and discuss findings from state assessments. In addition, a review of data has yet to demonstrate increased mastery of goals and outcomes for target groups of students.

- During a team interview, teachers gave several examples of feedback and recommendations shared with the administration. For example, one teacher felt instituting double periods for the sixth grade class was ineffective. The school building leader gave permission for the teachers to alter the schedule, which resulted in greater flexibility for instruction. Another teacher stated, “The administration is very supportive. I can always go to them for anything I need.” However, the administration took a major role in decision making during the observed teacher team meeting.
**Additional Findings**

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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**Findings**
Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices provide scaffolds and extensions into the curricula and student work products and discussions reflect high-levels of thinking.

**Impact**
Work products and discussions enable all learners throughout the school to demonstrate full engagement, higher order thinking and ownership in their learning.

**Supporting Evidence**
- During a ninth grade English literature class, students were told to read an essay, *Case Against Species Revival*. Afterwards, students had to employ two strategies from a list shared by the teacher, stating the author’s argument while citing textual evidence. Students engaged in an activity called, “speed-dating” where they alternate partners while sharing their claims and what they learned from their peers. At the end of the activity, various students shared what they learned which led to an independent writing task.

- In a seventh grade living environment class, the teacher engaged the students in question and discussion in preparation for an upcoming Regents exam. Some of the questions asked were, “What is the relationship of carbon dioxide to biotic factors?”, “What do you think is the number one environmental problem in the United States?”, and “Explain how and increase in population has contributed to pollution.” The teacher also used other methods such as a video and a PowerPoint presentation to support diverse learners. Students worked independently and collaboratively on these questions using Regents-level vocabulary.

- In a sixth grade English language arts (ELA) class, students worked in groups to identify and list character traits from *The Giver*. Students were assigned roles for completion of the task. As students shared their responses with the class, the teacher asked follow-up questions such as, “Can anyone give me a word to identify what it means that Jonah could see things which others could not see?” When the students looked puzzled, the teacher gave context clues to help students determine the word “perceptive”. The teacher also redirected students to a characterization chart and plot diagram to support their thinking.

- During a ninth grade physics class, students engaged in a lesson on transferring energy. One student was asked, “Can someone explain what will happen?” prior to the experiment. The teacher used numerous examples and modeled using pictures, a video, and sample sound waves. A student stood with the teacher in the front of the classroom using a slinky and demonstrated a longitudinal wave. The teacher also used real life examples to stimulate student thinking. She opened the classroom door and stated, “Let’s see what will happen if I leave the door open. Can you hear people from around the corner? How can the sound bend and go around the corner?” Several students responded to the question and were told to select others to answer questions which were posed by their classmates.
Quality Indicator: 2.2 Assessment  
Rating: Proficient

Findings
Throughout the school, teachers align assessments to curricula and use rubrics to provide students with constant and reliable feedback. Common assessments are used to trail student progress toward school goals.

Impact
Curricula aligned assessments leads to actionable feedback for students and teachers as well as regarding make adjustments to curricula, academic tasks and instruction towards student achievement.

Supporting Evidence
- The school utilizes pre, mid, and post-unit assessments to monitor student progress. Weekly assessments based on Regents exams are administered to students. For example, a living environment teacher used results from a beginning of the year assessment and set middle and end of year goals to assist seventh grade students with passing the Regents exam by the end of the school year. There are two tiers of students who have different activities/supports for students on track based on their grade level or students who are on an advanced track.

- Across grades and content areas, rubrics are aligned to the school’s grading policy and students report that they assist them in improving their grades. During an interview, one student stated, “Rubrics help me improve by telling me what to do and check for what I don’t have.” Another student stated, “Rubrics outline what is expected for a test or an essay. We usually get the 4-3-2-1 rubric.”

- Feedback is given to students verbally and in writing using a rubric. Additionally, students engage in peer and individual assessment. While visiting classrooms and reviewing portfolios of student work, rubric-based feedback with next steps was written on all tasks. For example, students in a global studies class completed a document-based question and forwarded their work to classmates so their peers using a rubric could score it. During a ninth grade trigonometry class, students used a checklist to determine if the expectations of the task were met.
Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations and provide training to the entire staff. The staff systematically communicates high expectations through effective feedback and supports for all students.

Impact
A culture of mutual accountability leads to a professional community where all staff take ownership of the school’s expectations. All students own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence
- All students take ownership of their educational experience by reviewing their grades regularly through Schoology, an online grading system, and communicating in regards to the feedback received with their teachers using this software. As a result, everyone in the school community has instant updates on student projects, homework, and other assignments. Currently, most students take college courses through a partnership with Medgar Evers College in eleventh and twelfth grade. Students create their own academic action plans in collaboration with school staff as well as monitor their own improvement towards meeting graduation requirements.

- During an interview, several teachers stated whenever a teacher is in need of professional assistance, they are responsible for supporting one another by sharing best practice with their colleagues. Another teacher stated, “We engage in peer reviews.” One teacher said, “We work to ensure we are on the same page so our students have a greater chance at passing the test.” Another teacher stated, “The administration encourages us to work together because it ensures more analytical thinking about our work.” Some examples of teacher-to-teacher support and communication of school-wide expectations include a teacher from the bridge program who created a project for new students. The teacher allowed his colleague an opportunity to view his teaching of this project to students, which resulted in the observer implementing and assigning this same project to his class.

- The school building leader communicates high expectations to the staff by meeting with them individually at the beginning and end of each semester to review data relative to courses they teach. The discussion is based on overall progress of students and observation data. The school building leader expects all staff to follow a protocol for instruction, which provisions students to learn from one another. One teacher stated, “The [school building leader] likes for students to work in groups a lot. They learn the most from one another. They help each other out if they have questions about the work.”