Quality Review Report

2014-2015

East Brooklyn Community High School
High School K673
9517 Kings Highway
Brooklyn
NY 11212

Principal: Patrick McGillicuddy

Dates of review: November 19, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Teresa Caccavale
The School Context

East Brooklyn Community High School is a high school with 191 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 83% Black, 14% Hispanic, 2% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 22% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014 - 2015 was 71.0%.

School Quality Criteria

### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school regularly...</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>Well Developed</td>
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<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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<tr>
<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>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator: 3.4 High Expectations   Rating: Well Developed

Findings
School leaders and staff articulate their expectations clearly and through multiple ways. Teachers and advocate counselors share a common responsibility to keep students learning in a safe environment and the school efficiently partners with families and empowers them with information to help them.

Impact
School-wide expectations are reinforced by all stakeholders using a shared language and a common vision. Supports to families are strong and reflect their identified needs while also fostering trust, deeper partnerships with families and expansion of learning for students.

Supporting Evidence
- The school's focus is to ensure that students are able to develop both academic skills and self-sufficiency in order to be successful in whatever post-secondary path they choose. They believe the merging of an academically rigorous program with effective personal development is the foundation for effectively promoting a culture of high expectations.
- A team of six advocate counselors, each with a caseload of 25 students, works with students and families once they are admitted in order to establish goals, outline academic and behavioral expectations, create a plan for graduation, and develop a relationship with the family.
- Once students have met a senior standing, meaning they have to earn 16 or fewer credits before graduation and have to pass 3 or fewer Regents exams, they are placed into a Future Focus caseload. The Future Focus counselor works with these students on post-secondary plans, graduation goals, and college and career exploration. Future Focus students work as a cohort on senior activities, attend college and career fairs, participate in college visits and are monitored closely to ensure they stay on track for graduation and beyond.
- A 3-cycle accelerated credit accumulation structure from September-December, December-March, and March-June creates opportunity for students to earn 18 credits per school year during the regular school day and up to 21 including the extended day, which involves blended online courses and internships for credit.
- Each trimester the course offerings are designed based on analysis of student transcripts and student need, then programming is completed by students' counselors, basing decisions on individual student needs and how to best promote high expectation for students to move towards their post-secondary goals at a rigorous pace.
### Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 2.2 Assessment | Rating: | Proficient |

#### Findings

Learning goals for students are embedded in course outcomes, each student is provided with an individual path towards graduation and teachers provide actionable feedback to students. However, there is not meaningful feedback for remedial and accelerated students to maximize their learning towards a clear portrait of student mastery.

#### Impact

The lack of meaningful feedback to all students leads to missed opportunities for teachers to provide students with meaningful feedback and make effective “in the moment” adjustments to meet all students’ learning needs so that they are aware of their next learning steps.

#### Supporting Evidence

- The school’s grading system ensures teachers are transparent with students about their grades. Rather than numerical grades, students receive feedback on the content and skills that are being covered in each class. Courses cover 10 outcomes; in order for students to earn a credit in the course they must meet the standard for at least 70% of the outcomes. Every two-three weeks, students receive progress reports that list the outcomes that have been covered in class so far and inform students whether the work they have done is on track to meeting standards (O), not yet on track to meeting standards (N), has met standards (M), or has exceeded standards (E).

- The school’s practice of outcome-based grading is aligned with their belief that assessment and feedback need to be frequent and transparent and students need actionable feedback that allows them to improve their work. The school also believes that students should not be penalized for the lack of knowledge or skill development that they have at the start of a class. Students have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their ability to meet the standards and are not penalized for the length of time they require to meet those standards. Students keep collections of their work and are able to discuss which outcomes are being assessed in each assignment and the skills and content areas they still need to work on. This grading system also helps teacher to differentiate since some students work towards earning an M on assignments while others work on extension activities or revising work in order to earn an E.

- Teachers align assessments to curricula, use assessment data to adjust curricula and instruction, and design ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment; however classroom checks for understanding do not always lead to instructional adjustments that support all learners. For example, in one algebra class some students were frustrated due to a challenging conceptual understanding and were unable to complete the task independently as the teacher did not provide actionable feedback.

- Departments use students’ internal and Regents assessment data to set the focus for lesson study and plan collaboratively based on ongoing formative assessment data. Teachers use protocols to revise assessments, refine the outcome map rubrics and norm the grading process while ensuring Common Core alignment.

- Teachers include performance-based assessments as a way to promote high levels of student thinking and participation. These assessments include moot courts in history, debate and historical reenactments in global studies, Socratic Seminars in English, designing dream homes in geometry, and crime scene analysis in forensic science. These assessments are followed by writing assessments so that students are able to use the analysis that has been developed in the performance-based assessments in their writing. Teachers have found using these performance based tasks as centerpiece of their unit plans pushes students to think critically about the material and deeply engage with the content since they are more invested in their work products.
Additional Findings

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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Findings
The school’s belief that students who are overaged and under-credited learn best through small group, differentiated, customized instruction, and positive interactions with their teachers is evident across the vast majority of classes.

Impact
Teachers across the school incorporate the school’s beliefs about effective teaching and learning in their lessons. Additionally, they use a variety of instructional strategies, supports and extensions made to the curriculum that result in increased outcomes for all students.

Supporting Evidence
- Teachers are focused on explicit instruction in the learning strategies. Teachers use these strategies for both reading and writing so that whenever students begin a new task or reading, they have ways to begin thinking about the material including making connections, asking questions, and making inferences. Since students are taught these strategies in English as well as all social science classes, they are able to use them to make meaning of challenging material and know these are skills strong readers and writers use. During an English class observed, students were asking questions and making inferences to extend analysis by reading the first body paragraph of an essay and highlighting the topic sentence, claim and reasoning, underlining the evidence and highlighting the discussion of the literacy elements.

- In all social science courses, students are learning the writing process, particularly focused on pre-writing strategies and revision. Teachers provide scaffolding through graphic organizers and conferring to support low-level students and push higher-level students. Since there is a focus on the writing process, all students work on improving their writing, no matter their starting point. In a Living Environment class observed, students were independently working on self-selected Regents questions and using the strategy of annotating connections to analyze the Regent test question prior to answering the question.

- The school believes that pushing students to engage and participate in higher level activities is critical to their success. For example, in a US History class observed, students were participating in a historical moot court dealing with Brown vs. Board of Education using questions and arguments to speak about the important historical and constitutional issues related to segregation. In an Algebra 2 class students were using a graphing calculator to find the equation of the line of best fit for a set of data and determining the correlation coefficient to three decimal places. During an American Sign Language class students were engaged in a Jeopardy competition where they were competing to sign the outcome skills and outcome content of the course in regards to the vocabulary and grammar of sign language and were receiving feedback about their work from their teacher and peers.
**Findings**
Professional collaborations are exemplified through team meetings and Japanese lesson study. Teachers routinely analyze student work products and behavioral data to better support students and make adjustments to their instruction.

**Impact**
Collaborations among teachers foster cohesive practices throughout the school and increased student outcomes.

**Supporting Evidence**
- Teacher teams use a set of protocols that are adapted from the Japanese Lesson Study in order to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching strategies and lesson planning with the goal of developing skills that students need to meet the Common Core standards. These protocols include teachers completing the assignment that they give to students and then grading those assignments, teachers teaching full lessons to one another prior to teaching them to students, and structures for brainstorming and planning lessons collaboratively and implementing challenging teaching practices.

- The department heads evaluate their team facilitation techniques comparing the way different teachers grade student work with the same rubric, structures for brainstorming and planning lessons collaboratively. The process is leading towards the concrete goal of identifying the most successful teaching strategies based on student growth and then spreading those practices across the school. There is a clear deliverable at the end of each trimester that is shared with the entire staff. There has been a greater shift in teaching practice than from any other professional development structure as self-identified by teachers in surveys and from administration's and outside coaches’ observations.

- Teacher teams have been set up to distribute leadership in the school are tasked with monitoring progress towards school goals and adapting practices to best meet student needs. The school defines “teacher teams” differently than traditional school as advocate counselors are included in these teams because they play a central role in students’ social emotional development that leads to students’ academic success. Once a month the staff meets to foster greater interdisciplinary collaboration and spread effective practices across departments. The staff meets in interdisciplinary groups and uses a consultancy protocol to give one another feedback on artifacts and to identify ways to spread those practices including lesson planning, unit planning, conferring and assessment strategies.

- Since 2013 all departments have taken part in a lesson study structure for professional development. As part of the process, internal pre- and post-assessments have been conducted and the school has seen gains in student achievement on all the assessments. Furthermore, on a survey conducted by the external consulting group Escolta, teachers were extremely positive about the impact of the professional development.
Quality Indicator: 1.1 Curriculum  
Rating: Well Developed

Findings
All curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Rigorous habits and higher order skills are emphasized and embedded coherently across grades and subjects.

Impact
The school’s curricular decisions have resulted in coherence across grades and subject areas in promoting college readiness for all learners. Academic tasks across grades and subjects ensure all learners must demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence
- The school has spent the last few years aligning their curriculum and teaching to the Common Core Standards while at the same time ensuring they are preparing students for the Regents exams. The curriculum focuses on overlapping areas of skill development and conceptual knowledge to ensure students succeed with both of these challenges.

- English teachers are including more non-fiction texts as supporting texts to a central work of fiction, creating a scope and sequence of reading with increasing text complexity, emphasizing learning strategies as a tool to make meaning of text and include analysis in their writing, and increasing the amount of independent reading in all classrooms. These learning strategies include making connections, making inferences, determining importance, asking questions, visualizing, predicting, and synthesizing.

- Math teachers have shifted to focusing on fewer problems in the lesson and spending more time emphasizing the conceptual understandings and mathematical Habits of Mind including searching for patterns, making connections, reasoning, meaning, communicating mathematically, reflecting, solving and posing problems, self-directed learning and multiple approaches including writing about math processes required for solving problems. These strategies provide students with multiple points of entry to access rigorous mathematical concepts.

- Science teachers are increasing the time they spend teaching scientific skills including making hypotheses and backing these up with citing evidence, using observations to make meaningful inferences and predictions, and evaluating the validity of claims based on the evidence they see. Teachers have worked on promoting writing skills in science classrooms, focusing on how to provide evidence and textual analysis to back up scientific claims. This has led students to think more critically about the content they are learning. In a Living Environment class observed, students were using the strategy of annotating connections to analyze a Regents test. Specifically, students were explaining scientific concepts and processes with the specific and correct use of scientific vocabulary, using connecting language to tie together concepts and synthesizing key ideas.

- All social science classes, including English, social studies and science, plan with a focus on text complexity and how to scaffold readings. The explicit teaching of writing a claim, citing textual evidence to support a claim, and including thorough analysis is a key piece of all of these classes. Teachers incorporate the learning strategies into both reading and writing lessons.