Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Ronald Edmonds Learning Center II
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle  17K484
430 Howard Ave.
Brooklyn
NY 11233

Principal: Michele Luard

Dates of Review:
November 2, 2016 - November 3, 2016

Lead Reviewer: Audrey Madison
The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Celebration** to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Focus** to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as **Additional Finding**. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

### Information about the School

Ronald Edmonds Learning Center II serves students in grade 6 through grade 8. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at [http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm](http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm).

### School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
</tr>
<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>
</tr>
<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>
</tr>
<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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Quality Ratings continued

### School Culture

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Additional Finding \ Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<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>Additional Finding \ Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding \ Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community</td>
<td>Additional Finding \ Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Additional Finding \ Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<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>Area of Celebration \ Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS</td>
<td>Additional Finding \ Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings
Teachers are engaged in structured, school-based and interschool professional collaborations that have strengthened teacher capacity. School leaders have embedded shared decision-making practices throughout the school.

Impact
Schoolwide instructional coherence promotes the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards, resulting in increased student achievement for all learners. Distributive practices foster opportunities for teachers to play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- During an observed English Language Arts (ELA) team meeting, teachers engaged in an analysis of student work on a writing performance task based on two informational texts. The presenting teacher explained the task and the instructional supports offered to students who are not yet meeting standards. Following a structured protocol, colleagues worked to diagnose student strengths and needs across levels. The facilitator elicited trends across the student work as teachers indicated, “All students cite evidence from the text but do not use details appropriately enough to support their responses. Low level responses lack coherency because of the limited use of transitions.” The team recommended instructional strategies that would benefit the class, such as modeling strong sentence and paragraph structures, utilizing anchor papers, and emphasizing transitional words. Across various teams, colleagues express that presenters implement the suggested instructional strategies, with follow up discussions at the team level regarding effectiveness. Typically, the roles of presenter, facilitator, and offering collegial suggestions are rotated thereby, promoting enhanced teacher development across the school.

- School leaders and selected teachers have been engaged in the Chancellor's Initiative for Interschool Collaborative Learning for over three years as participants in the Learning Partners Program (LPP). The LPP team has contributed to the development of cohesive instructional practices across the school, ensuring consistent structured components within each lesson that include presenting a focus question which aligns to the learning objective, alignment to Common Core Learning Standards, targeted do now activities, and summaries of each lesson. A learning focus on assessment for and of learning resulted in schoolwide utilization of checks for understanding. Exit tickets and the use of self-assessment tools such as a traffic light protocol, were evidenced in use by teachers across classrooms and led to reteaching, regrouping and addressing student misunderstandings. Increased student achievement is reflected in the percentages of students making at least one year of progress, which exceeds the city average in both ELA, 80 percent compared to 63.4 percent and math, 70 percent compared to 61.3 percent.

- Members of the LPP, curriculum, and data teams guide the implementation of the Middle School Quality Initiative (MSQI) with a focus on increasing reading levels. Through MSQI, ELA, Spanish and science, teacher’s turnkey professional development to colleagues across subjects in grade teams. Teachers collaboratively facilitate implementation of the Word Generation curriculum, developing academic language across four content areas and accelerating student learning. Teachers note that students increasingly use their newly acquired academic vocabulary in discussions, and make connections across content. In one instance, this collaboration resulted in an interdisciplinary debate between science and English Language Arts classes about the effect of global warming.
Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices reflect the schoolwide instructional focus to engage students in their own learning using various instructional strategies based on the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Student discussions reflect high levels of thinking and participation.

Impact

While discussions and meaningful work products reflect high levels of student thinking and participation, enhanced student thinking and levels of ownership are inconsistent.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher practices provide communication with students regarding what they are learning. Across classrooms, agendas are consistently displayed and include a focus question and learning objectives, which are phrased as student friendly I can statements. The embedded Common Core Learning Standards are identified. Homework assignments and exit ticket tasks are also conveyed in the agendas and related summary questions frame each lesson. Teachers employ the workshop model providing whole class direct and explicit instruction then offer opportunities for students to work in groups, pairs or independently. In one instance, after review of a do now activity to convert decimals to equivalent fractions, the seventh grade math teacher then modeled conversion of percentages to equivalent fractions and guided the students through practice. In a Spanish class, eighth grade students with disabilities completed a do now to define and give examples of adjectives in English. The teacher then presented a video which exposed students to examples of adjectives written and spoken in masculine and feminine form. The teacher led students in guided oral practice of both gender forms. However, because the examples used across classes were similar and less complex, there were missed occasions to extend deeper application of the concepts.

- Opportunities for student-to-student discussions were evident in groups and pairs across classrooms. Sixth graders in an Integrated Co-Teaching class collaborated through differentiated group tasks to determine the gist of passages from the text, “The Lightning Thief.” Responses were charted and shared. Seventh grade students engaged in group analysis of pictures in their photography class as they collectively chose pictures to examine and used their understanding of the elements of photography to build on each other’s ideas.

- Presented with differentiated tasks, students in one science class worked to apply the scientific method to solve a problem. In one group, a student referred to an anchor chart and reminded her peers that the dependent variable is what they will measure. In another group, students were overheard deliberating and adding to each other’s ideas as they revised statements to formulate their hypotheses. In another science class, through differentiated tasks and group work, students discussed contour intervals and explained the procedures they used to calculate depression and elevation points on their contour maps. However, because their discussion lacked application to the mountains and valleys that were represented by the maps, student thinking and ownership was limited.
### Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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</table>

#### Findings

School leaders and faculty make purposeful decisions ensuring curricula are aligned to Common Core and/or content standards and meets the needs of teachers and students. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills across grades and subjects.

#### Impact

All students, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners, have access to rigorous coherent curricula which promotes college and career readiness.

#### Supporting Evidence

- Informed by engagement in data meetings, discussion and external recommendations, school leaders decided to change their curricula materials to better meet the needs of their students and teachers. The EngageNY math units were chosen to strengthen the alignment of curriculum to the Common Core Learning Standards and integration of the instructional shifts. Teachers are supported by the sequence of units which builds the foundational skills students need. Project based learning tasks from the previous curriculum are utilized as supplementary materials to further engage students. Recommendations that better student growth would result from the use of Expeditionary Learning for ELA, encouraged school leaders to explore and adopt the EngageNY curricula. Faculty members state that students make better connection to the texts and are more engrossed in the full texts rather than the excerpts from the previous curriculum. Embedded scaffolds and focused writing units were further rationale to adapt this curriculum.

- School leaders decided to offer opportunities for students to accumulate high school Regents credit, and therefore made modifications in the science curriculum, aligning the middle school curriculum with Earth Science for seventh graders and Living Environment taught to eighth graders. Foundational science skills and strengthening the processes for the scientific method are the curricula focus of grade six.

- Academic tasks, evident in planning documents and student work, reflect the importance of high levels of student thinking. A seventh grade math task requires students to create tables to develop and apply understanding of proportional and non-proportional relationships and explain reasoning. Math students in sixth grade create mosaic drawings then determine the percentage and fractional amount of each color used. Students present logical arguments through essays to answer the question, “Should the United States act to protect undocumented immigrants?” Students are expected to write a literary analysis to identify the common theme between two myths as an end of unit performance task.
Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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</thead>
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Findings

Across grades and subject areas, common assessments are used by school leaders and faculty to determine student progress toward goals. Assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

Assessment results are used effectively to adjust curricula and instruction to meet the learning needs of all students.

Supporting Evidence

- As per the Middle School Quality Initiative, teachers administer Degrees of Reading Power assessments three times a year to monitor students reading comprehension levels schoolwide. Currently, results from the fall assessments are charted by class and have identified students who are functioning severely below grade levels therefore classified as at risk; below grade level, consequently in need of additional support; at grade levels and above grade levels. Students are targeted and grouped for academic intervention based on this data. Classroom teachers of core subjects use this data to form instructional groups within content areas.

- Math unit pre-assessments are administered and results are captured in an online data system. Teachers and school leaders are informed by results that indicate which students begin each unit on grade level, less than one level below grade or more than one grade level below. Additionally, teachers use the diagnostic performance data to determine next steps for instruction within the unit based on identified strengths and needs for each student.

- Pre- and post-unit assessment data are discussed with students to determine goals in English Language Arts and math. Interviewed students shared their pre-assessment graphs and goal sheets, which identified how they performed on standards within the units. An eighth grade student is aiming to “use the structure of an expression to identify ways to rewrite it.” A sixth grade student reflected that he needs to work on “describing how the plot unfolds and how characters respond and change.”

- A range of checks for understanding and student self-assessment are employed by teachers across classrooms. In one seventh grade ELA class, exit tickets required students to determine if they made progress toward learning targets by choosing if they effectively engaged in discussions with diverse partners or identified a theme as it applies to the text. Students were also asked to write explanations for how they know they made progress. In a Spanish class, students had opportunities to place written post-it notes on a classroom traffic light chart to indicate their levels of understanding and need for re-teaching. One post-it showed that the student partially understood what was done that day but requested review the next day to lead to better understanding, while another student’s response indicated understanding of the verbs and pronouns and when to use them.

- Teachers consistently used a student data sheet across classrooms, using a check system to record whether students require re-teaching or support, in addition to checking that students were on task, and levels of completed work. Where suitable, teachers wrote specific notes reflective of adjustments to meet student learning needs. In one instance, a teacher noted students at one table did not have a clear hypothesis. In another case, a teacher indicated consideration of switching partners for two students who were not on task.
**Additional Finding**

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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 consistently communicate high expectations and ensure training is provided for all staff. Students are supported toward next levels by an established culture of learning that provides effective and focused guidance toward next levels.

**Impact**

School leaders and staff are mutually responsible for attaining high expectations for themselves and students. All students, including high needs subgroups, are prepared for success.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Expectations for high quality teacher practice are prevalently messaged. A school specific checklist of non-negotiables aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, is shared with the entire staff and supports coherence regarding all domains. A detailed staff handbook offers an extensive instructional matters section. Components of the workshop model are explained in full. Expectations for utilization of questioning techniques and characteristics of good teaching are provided based on guidelines from *Teaching for the 21st Century*.

- The professional development (PD) calendar reveals evidence of professional learning opportunities based on teacher surveys, data review, a state review and classroom observation. The calendar indicates schoolwide agreement of the following major priorities for staff learning: building relationships, use of data, improving student learning, and parental involvement. Specific sub-categories for each priority have been identified and varied models for professional development include growth at the teacher team level, and PD led by school leaders, targeted training, and involvement in an improvement process.

- Professional development resources have been compiled into an online document system providing access to relevant educational articles, video clips that explain components of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, strategies for writing learning objective statements, differentiating instruction, creating exit slips, and using depth of knowledge levels. School leaders refer teachers to specific resources as needed to enhance teacher practice.

- The first lines of the principal’s message in the student handbook pose, “What college do you plan to attend? What is your high school choice?” A student and family friendly Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) for Students is also embedded in the handbook and conveys school goals including “increase academic achievement for all students and ensure graduation from middle school and readiness for life thereafter.” These CEP goals are prominently displayed on colorful posters around the school. Promotional criteria are also communicated in the handbook for students and interviewed teachers expressed that they review promotion standards with students. Guidance counselors, teachers and additional staff provide support to students and families throughout each grade in different ways. A summer bridge program is offered to incoming sixth graders to transition them to expectations for middle school. Grade seven students talk to a counselor about high school choices and investigate high school fairs and open houses. Regents coursework and exams are offered to seventh and eighth graders, resulting in 22 percent of eighth graders earning high school credit as per the School Quality Snapshot. The School Quality Guide indicates that 73 percent of this school's former eighth graders earned enough credit in ninth grade to be on track for graduation.
Findings

Teachers grow their practice through support and effective feedback from school leaders and teacher peers. Feedback from classroom observations and analysis of student work accurately captures strengths, challenges and next steps.

Impact

Teacher support and feedback articulate clear expectations for teacher practice and promote professional growth and reflection such that instructional practices are elevated across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Professional individual growth plans aligned to school goals are documented on teacher forms. As an example, one teacher determined a goal to improve questioning and discussion techniques and identified engaging students in higher-level critical thinking and allowing student-to-student learning as the action steps to be taken. The teacher further articulated utilization of accessible professional development materials and, “learning good practice from colleagues” as supportive resources. Using assessment to drive instruction was indicated as a professional goal for another teacher. Stated action steps were to request assistance from colleagues to strengthen the use of exit slips and do now assignments and to assess more deeply using questioning when circulating.

- Collegial intervisitation opportunities promote peer-to-peer support. Observers utilize a common template to record low- and mid-level evidence regarding the alignment of focus questions to assessments, types and levels of questioning, and how teachers monitor and use student responses to inform instruction. In one instance, the observer noted, “ongoing assessment was demonstrated through circulating between groups and posing probing stimulating questions.” In another example, the visiting teacher observed that most students did not understand the presented concepts and offered a possible next step by asking, “Is it possible to chart and display the information in the lesson for student to reference?”

- Meaningful feedback to facilitate teacher growth across performance levels is evident in classroom observation forms. In one instance, designing coherent instruction was rated developing. Recommendations for improvement were made to give adequate time for students to answer the exit ticket, and increase levels of rigor by using Depth of Knowledge tools to create exit tickets, which promote thinking aligned to varying student needs. Feedback regarding an effective rating for designing coherent instruction also offered recommendations to further enhance planning and preparation. Suggestions to ensure differentiation that enabled lower leveled learners to synthesize, analyze and complete work at appropriate levels.

- The principal provided individualized assistance to a new teacher to develop a science lesson plan for students with disabilities. The learning support resulted in the formation of a focus question aligned to desired outcomes for the lesson, added visual supports to scaffold understanding, and a structured task with worksheets to allow students to use scientific instruments, measure, calculate, and draw conclusions. In addition, coherency in planning was further modeled by developing an exit ticket question that was aligned to the focus question. During a follow-up discussion with the principal, and examination of student work, the teacher reflected that students with disabilities and English Language Learners were actively engaged in this lesson.