Quality Review Report

2016-2017

East Flatbush Community Research School
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 18K581
905 Winthrop St.
Brooklyn
NY 11203

Principal: Daveida Daniel

Dates of Review:
May 11, 2017 - May 12, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Debra Tasioudis
The Quality Review Report

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


### School Quality Ratings

#### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<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 Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</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>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</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>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## School Quality Ratings continued

### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<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</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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### Systems for Improvement

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<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<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</td>
<td>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</td>
<td>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</td>
<td>Proficient</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</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</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.4 Positive Learning Environment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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Findings

Culture building, discipline, and social-emotional supports are guided by a belief in the importance of student voice, honoring student interests, and relationship building. School leaders ensure that structures are in place to support the academic and personal growth of students.

Impact

There is a safe and inclusive culture, in which students are meaningfully involved in decision-making. Strong relationships and incentives positively impact students’ academic and personal behaviors and put them on a path to success.

Supporting Evidence

- Students, families, and staff alike shared that the school has a safe and positive environment. Students were clear that teachers, students, and adults treat each other respectfully. There is a clear theory of action that learning begins with students feeling safe and that this is built off of strong relationships with students. This theory of action is evident throughout the school via the Positive Behavioral Intervention System (PBIS) and Panther Pay, a virtual money incentive program for students in classrooms through which students can earn money for items ranging from key chains to school trips to Sky Zone or Funplex. Students making progress or top earnings are publicly celebrated. Students and teachers articulated consistency in the PBIS system across the school, which has resulted in less than five suspensions a year for the last two years.

- Students, staff, and families all shared that the school community is safe and inclusive. As one student shared, “This is a home-like environment. We feel safe because there are no threats. If there is a problem, you can always speak to a teacher or the University Settlement [a community-based partner] people.” Students and parents also had many stories of personalized supports from targeted mentoring and advisory. All students in the student meeting shared that they had adults who knew them well; many mentioned five or six. One student shared, “I have a lot of teachers that help me out and I need it. Like six teachers. If I get in trouble, they help me work it out. If I don’t have time to do my homework at home, they give me time with a computer on their time.” Speaking to the power of guidance and advisement that is personalized, one student shouted out, as is a common practice in the school, his basketball coach and mentor, “He helps me cool down if I am going to fight, he helps with my homework. He does so much for me. I would be failing without him.” Similarly, a parent shared, “It’s not just academics here. They encourage our kids to reach their highest potential. My son has an IEP, and his mentor really helps him to learn to control his temper about things that happen at school and at home.”

- The school has an active student leadership team that serves as a voice for students, shaping what happens in and after school, ensuring that students have a voice in the clubs that are offered, and which ones they participate in. The team created a survey for students about what clubs they wanted offered, and worked with the school staff to ensure that clubs, such as poetry clubs, were included at student request. Last year, seven students participated in robotics, and this year, at their request, the school has added 3D printing as a class, not just a club. Students also advocated for co-ed sports teams, which have been added this year.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings
Teaching strategies, including scaffolds such as organizers and peer discussion strategies consistently provide students multiple entry points into tasks and discussions.

Impact
All students are engaged in challenging tasks and demonstrate higher order thinking skills, especially in discussions. Teaching practices yield high levels of student thinking and participation for all learners, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs).

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers use scaffolds and supports for students, included purposeful teacher questioning, graphic organizers, Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), manipulatives, access to peers, anchor charts, at-the-table vocabulary supports, and teacher think-alouds. Typical of many classes visited, in an eighth-grade science lab on the atmosphere, water and pollution, the teacher opened the lesson with a VTS discussion about an image of a polluted river in India, and supported student learning throughout the lab with anchor charts, a teacher think-aloud, and access to peers and adults as students explored the effects of pollution on water at several stations. While all students were asked to make scientific observations, other questions posed to students ranged in complexity, from asking them to draw conclusions from their experiment and apply it to what they have learned about agricultural fields, to matching labeled pictures of industrial pollution and acid rain to complete sentences about atmosphere and water for ELLs. High quality extensions for advanced students were not observed. Similarly, in a sixth-grade math class on calculating the mean absolute deviation, students worked in small groups, with supports that included calculators, access to peers, and tiered tasks. While students across classes were engaged in tiered tasks, high quality extensions for students were not common place. In a few cases, graphic organizers limited, rather than supported, the thinking skills that students were able to demonstrate, especially for students who were already strong writers.

- Student-to-student discussions reflected high levels of thinking and participation in most classrooms visited, including a silent, web-based conversation in an English Language Arts (ELA) class where students read a shared text on laptops and made in-text citations, posed questions, and answered one another's questions online. In a seventh-grade science class, students worked together to analyze cells and cell structures by making a conceptual model comparison with their school building to flesh out their thinking about the functions of parts of cells. Student discussion about cell walls and membranes, and their comparison to the school's hallways and security guards, was high level though unstructured. Some students were aided by accountable talk stems.

- Opportunities for students to create written work products also allowed students to demonstrate high levels of thinking and participation. In several ELA classes, students created written responses that analyzed poetry with evidence from the text. In a social studies class, students analyzed primary source documents, and gathered notes on the actions of protesters during school desegregation. In this classroom, as in a few others, the use of graphic organizers supported student discussion at high levels but may have limited the rigor and demand placed on student writing because the space allowed for writing was too small.
### Additional Finding

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

Curricula across grades purposefully align to key Common Core Learning Standards, and strategies are embedded to ensure students develop the ability to cite evidence from text and share their ideas with peers. Curricula consistently emphasize higher-order thinking skills and habits for all learners.

#### Impact

Lesson plans and academic tasks across the school consistently offer all learners, including students with disabilities and ELLs, the opportunity to practice higher-order thinking skills and habits on Common Core-aligned curricula. Units and lesson plans build coherence and promote college readiness.

#### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty ensure that units and lesson plans are aligned to the Common Core and arts strategies, such as Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), that encourage critical thinking and deep discussion through collaborative analysis of visual arts. The school partners with Common Wheel to help teachers embed opportunities for students to develop critical thinking skills into the opening of each lesson, and throughout the units of study, integrating Common Wheel's *Images, Sound and Story* units. VTS was a part of most lesson plans observed, usually in the do now, and gave students an opportunity to gain entry into the topic or lesson, providing background and opportunities for students to make connections, as observed in a humanities class where the image observed was of a protester. Students were able to speculate about the protesters’ background, the time period, and the issues that they may have cared about before exploring school desegregation. The inclusion of VTS also fosters a focus on theme and central idea and allows the teacher to focus part of the lesson on discussion, all of which are literacy standards of focus for the school. The school leaders and teachers have also recreated the school’s ELA and humanities units, and infused them with the arts curriculum, so that students are exploring similar topics and practicing similar skills across the different classes on the grade.

- Eight of the nine lesson plans observed for the classrooms visited included tiered tasks for students, to ensure rigor for diverse learners. For example, in a sixth-grade reading workshop lesson on the use of symbolism in Robert Frost's poetry, there were three tiered tasks planned for groups of learners, with an additional active, independent learning station for more advanced study. Questions across the tasks ranged in complexity from, “Explain what Robert Frost is talking about in this poem” to “There are a few themes that could fit this poem. Choose the one you think fits best [from a list of four] and explain why with evidence from the text.” This planning of tiered tasks, with opportunities for students to work together, citing evidence from the text or problem solving in planned groups was typical across classrooms. Provisions, such as chunked text and vocabulary supports, were planned to support students with disabilities and ELLs in most plans.

- Every six weeks, the school leaders do unit audits to ensure that units have clear learning objectives, focused standards, and tiered activities and supports. In math, teacher teams selected standards of focus across units based on exam results, prioritizing ratios and proportions for grades six and seven, and functions for grade eight, with a separate sequence of study for seventh and eighth graders preparing for the Algebra Regents exam. In a class for students preparing for the Regents exam, students worked in small groups on a purposefully non-scaffolded task to solve equations using their knowledge of perfect squares and perfect cubes, ensuring that students worked collaboratively as they engaged in productive struggle. Students were given a choice of manipulatives to use (or not), but little guidance on a process, ensuring that students made their own selections. Students made their thinking process clear to others as they defended their work to one another in small groups and the whole class at the end of the lesson.
**Additional Finding**

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

Across classrooms, teachers use common assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula and common assessments, and glows and grows are consistently used to determine student performance.

**Impact**

Feedback consistently supports teacher and student understanding of achievement, and assessment analysis drives curricular and instructional adjustments.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Across classrooms and in work observed in the small group student meeting, much of the student work had clear, actionable feedback to students that was connected to a rubric or to a clear criterion. Five of the six pieces of student work shared at the meeting had clear glows and grows or next steps. For example, one student’s writing piece on whether or not child soldiers should be given amnesty, demonstrated a glow, “You stated your position well and used text details to support it.” The student also received a grow, “Follow the method for quoting that you were taught. Revise and edit your work and resubmit your work.” The specificity of this feedback on the student’s writing piece was typical of glows and grows in other subject areas. For example, feedback to a student on a rational numbers quiz read, “Glow: You show strong understanding of simplifying expressions with rational numbers.” The teacher went on to remind the student to draw a number line. Students, teachers, and parents alike were also clear that students receive regular grades that follow the school’s grading policy through an online grading system that is consistently updated.

- The school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subjects. Planning of units through teacher teams is shown in the records of teams online in the Google Drive. Teachers use of common assessments and student data to make adjustments to curriculum and instruction. While use of common assessments was not seen as informing structural changes to units, unit plans did demonstrate pacing adjustments for more time, or less, on topics as well as the isolation of particular standards of focus for re-teaching to all or part of the class, to students in extended learning time, or in Saturday Academy. For example, notes from a math department team meeting show teacher reflection from a data dive in January, where teachers collaboratively reviewed the results of a math benchmark assessment, and in grade level teams, identified standards to be retaught, a new conferring tool to record student thinking during the lesson, and the addition of collaborative problem solving opportunities within the unit for groups of students to “discuss within their groups their responses to the problems and their process.” These adjustments to tasks for groups, and the identification of standards to focus on were typical of the work of other instructional departments in the school.

- Teachers also use their common assessments, such as Degrees of Reading Power (DRP), and Teachers College writing tasks to inform student grouping, including pairing with tiered tasks or heterogeneous groups to facilitate the exchange of ideas. Teachers were clear that groups are assessed after interims; end of units, and sometimes after end-of-lesson assessments.
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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</table>

Findings

School leaders and teachers consistently communicate high expectations, such as daily reading assignments, to faculty and families about college and career readiness for all students.

Impact

The school leaders and staff create a culture for learning marked by mutual accountability and family partnerships that supports student progress toward meeting high expectations for college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school’s instructional focus incorporates daily reading as well as writing and discussion in all content areas to engage students. These focus points and high expectations are laid out every year at the beginning of the year as a collaborative effort of school leaders and faculty, and are based on analysis of data from the previous year. In September and October, teacher teams selected a focus strategy to adopt as a department to meet student learning needs and further the school’s goals. In addition, teams took a close look at adopted aspects of the Danielson Framework for Teaching to impact faculty’s understanding and implementation of these components. Teachers on various teams work together to create mutual accountability for meeting these expectations through sharing of practices, selecting standards of focus, taking on leadership roles, and teacher-led professional learning. About half of the professional learning observed in the school’s records is led by school staff. School leaders and faculty have also condensed the school’s instructional beliefs and focus with the Danielson Framework for Teaching into the East Flatbush Best Practices Rubric, a tool that school leaders and teachers utilize as they reflect on teacher growth. This framework is also used by internal teacher leaders, and external coaches as they guide and reflect on teacher growth in meeting expectations.

- Parents articulated that the school leaders and faculty successfully partner with families in the accessibility and ease of communication between parents and staff. Student-led conferences provide opportunities for students to share their progress with their families, and keep them informed about the goals that they have set. As one student shared, “At first, it’s intimidating to run the meeting, but then you get to decide what you want to highlight.” Students also monitor their goals during data days and in self-reflection in their portfolios. As one parent stated, “Communication here is not one way. Everyone knows you, and you feel loved and welcome, and they are very approachable. Someone will find time to help you, even if it is Saturday. Every teacher shares their email and phone number, and that is a big thing.” Another parent shared, “If I email in the morning before school, I get a response by 10 am.” Parents also shared about opportunities to learn how to better use the school’s web applications and about computer literacy classes, which are helping parents to better understand their students’ instructional demands and helps them by giving them computers for their students to use at home.

- School leaders and faculty also create learning opportunities for families and students that help families to understand the expectations of high school and college, as well as their students’ progress in learning experiences that are readying them for high school and college. As a parent of a seventh grader shared, “My daughter is already being prepared for high school in her work toward the math Regents. I came in the last marking period, and they talked with me about high school readiness and selecting a good high school. They keep me very informed.” An eighth-grade parent echoed, “They have a class for parents to show us how to apply to schools and what to look for.” In addition to the Regents courses, students get exposure to colleges through college trips, and many different talents and careers through extended learning time and Wellness Day, such as coding, theater, dance, mindfulness workshops, and yoga.
## Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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### Findings

Data-driven teacher teams consistently analyze assessment results and student work for students that they share. Inquiry team leaders and other teacher leaders ensure that distributive leadership structures are in place.

### Impact

Teacher collaborations strengthen instructional capacity and lead to progress toward goals, including college readiness, for groups of students. Across the school, teachers act as leaders and have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams consistently analyze data and student work for students whom they share or students on whom they are focused in department or grade-level teams. Teachers shared, and school records demonstrate, that in department meetings, typically, one teacher brings a few pieces of student work and a lesson plan from the current unit. Teachers use a tuning protocol to uncover student thinking to help plan changes to instructional strategies, such as the spread of math discussions and changes to pacing or supports for students. ELA, math, science, and humanities teachers also meet together weekly in grade-level meetings to talk about gradewide curricular pacing and to analyze Data Driven Classroom (DDC) performance or benchmark data to create updates in planning across the grade. Teachers also set the agenda for their work with external coaches based on their own analysis of student need. Teacher teams keep their records in Google Drive, allowing teachers and school leaders to track improvements in teacher practice and progress toward goals for groups of students.

- Grade-level teams also include social workers, and time is spent reviewing data to plan supports and interventions for academics, attendance, and behavior. The team reviews section sheet data from classes, updates from guidance and the school support team, parent outreach efforts, and academic data from the school’s online grading system to ensure that teachers collaborate on strategies to promote progress for students across the grade and make additions to the advisory curriculum. The school community also engages in schoolwide data days at various points of the year. Teacher teams across the school simultaneously look at exam data three times a year for a full day to determine areas of focus needed across grades and subject areas or for re-teaching before the New York State ELA exam.

- The school leaders ensure that there are distributive leadership structures in place so that teachers have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning and adult development. The school has a master teacher and each team has a facilitator, selected collaboratively by the school leaders and teachers. There are also other teacher leaders, such as the Individualized Education Program teacher, the United Federation of Teachers representative, and a lead special educator, who serve as instructional leads in the school and work together with the other teacher leaders and school leaders to create professional learning for the staff and support for instructional expectations. Some of the teachers participate in the Turnaround for the Arts initiative and lead the school’s work in integrating the arts across the curriculum and into the afterschool program and School Wellness Days. As teachers at a question and answer meeting shared, “They offer us a menu of training and we have the luxury of going deeply into what we want, as long as there is growth. If we can show how [an instructional strategy] works, then we are encouraged to share it with other staff, through classroom visits or creating professional learning for each other.”