Quality Review Report

2018-2019

East Elmhurst Community School

Elementary 30Q329

26-25 97Th Street
Queens
NY 11369

Principal: Rachel Staroba-Hallenbeck

Dates of Review:
May 9, 2019 - May 10, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Carlos Perez
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

East Elmhurst Community School serves students in grade K through grade 5. 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.

School Quality Ratings

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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>Additional Finding</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</td>
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</tbody>
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### Systems for Improvement

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

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<tr>
<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>Area of Celebration</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>
</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>
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<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>
</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.3 Leveraging Resources</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
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</table>

Findings
The use of all resources and organizational decisions including hiring, and scheduling support the school’s instructional goals and action plans. Staff time is structured for teams to have extensive regular meetings.

Impact
Effective support of goals and action plans is evidenced in student work products. The work of teacher teams has resulted in improved instruction and the development of challenging academic tasks for all students promoting their college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's dual language program is effectively supported through the strategic decision to implement the American Reading Company program in addition to the professional development (PD) that is provided all teachers. Funding is used for PD, which includes the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) and the school’s new math program. An outside consultant for social studies and a retired principal who has vast experiences in supporting and implementing a fine arts program were employed. This partnership to support the arts specifically addresses the school's goal and belief in the importance of providing all students with learning in the fine arts. Money and specific planning time was allocated to revamp mentor texts and leveled classroom libraries. These actions positively impacted student reading levels. The most recent Fontas and Pinnel assessment data for second grade students indicate a 20 percent increase in reading levels for this school year.

- Teacher teams meet several times per week, which provides substantial planning time for teachers and related service providers to focus on improving instruction and rigor. Teachers shared they meet beyond their scheduled time and often meet during lunch to continue the work that they do during inquiry. The work of teams produces instructional changes, such as planning to ensure access for students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs). Lesson plans, professional learning reflections and Advance data all indicate improvement in teacher practice, particularly in the area of content knowledge and pedagogical practice. The work of teacher teams has also resulted in the development of more challenging writing tasks specifically focusing on citing evidence from texts.

- The hiring practices are directly connected to the school's instructional focus and the needs of students and staff. When candidates conduct demonstration (demo) lessons, teachers are invited to view demo lessons with school leaders and provide input relating to those candidates that will move to the next level in the interview process. In addition, school leaders and teachers evaluate all aspects of the candidate’s qualifications, especially how they relate to students. Teacher feedback is always taken into consideration when making a final decision regarding a candidate. Additionally, school leaders and staff look for teachers with multiple certifications, varied experiences as well as their hobbies and interests in art, music, or dance. Careful attention is given when creating students’ schedules to ensure that students are paired with specific teachers based on their individual learning needs.
Area of Focus

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

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create rubrics, grading policies and assessments that are aligned to the school’s curricula. Across many, but as yet not the vast majority of classrooms, teacher assessment practices consistently reflect ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact

Most, but not all, of the feedback provided to students is actionable and offers students a clear portrait of mastery. Teachers make adjustments that meet the needs of all students, but some students are not aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Most feedback provided to students identified student strengths and gave actionable next steps related to their area of focus. For example, during a fifth-grade integrated co-teaching (ICT) math class, students were given feedback slips from the prior day’s lesson, and students were grouped based on their responses. For example, one feedback ticket stated, “You both have the same answers, but different ways of getting the answer. Discuss your strategies and decide which strategy to present.” A second feedback ticket praised both students for their explanation of a question and asked them to share the results of another to ensure they have the same answers. However, evidence of feedback to other students simply stated “Good work” or “Excellent,” thus limiting the student’s understanding of what is done well or what is needed to improve.

- Throughout the classrooms visited students worked independently or in groups while teachers conferenced with students and provided support to small, targeted groups. Teachers in several classrooms circulated throughout the room and observed students as they worked independently. Many of the teachers memorialized student conferences by using a checklist or taking informal anecdotal notes. During one lesson the teacher interrupted the class to address a recurring misconception. However, in some classes, conference documentation and in class instructional adjustments were not evident limiting feedback and students’ awareness of how to improve.

- A discussion regarding how feedback affects the quality of student work was a focus of the meeting with students. Several students explained they receive feedback “mostly in math and in writing”. Feedback is usually clipped to their work from the prior day and used when they engage in partner work during their next class. Another student said that the feedback she receives in math is helpful because it helps her “focus more on what I need to work on to get better.” Students shared that gallery walks take place across some classes and subjects where peers offer written feedback on their work in addition to their teachers. Rubrics are part of the feedback process and students review and reflect on the feedback they receive. They explained the teacher indicates on the rubric itself the areas in which they are proficient.
Findings

Staff ensures that the school aligns curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards (Common Core) and integrates the instructional shifts with an emphasis on writing in each curriculum area. Rich instructional programs are provided students that require rigor and higher order thinking skills for all learners including ELLs and students with disabilities.

Impact

Curricula decisions build coherence across grades and subject areas. The emphasis on rigorous tasks leads to students demonstrating their thinking and promoting college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Coherence across curricular planning documents was evident across grades and subject areas. All lesson plans are aligned to the Common Core in each subject area. Lesson plans include sections for active engagement and independent practice along with sections that clearly outline scaffolds and other methods that provide access for all students. Prior learning and previous work is connected from one lesson to another whenever possible. For example, a third-fifth grade bridge writing class explains how students will take the speeches they started to draft in the previous lesson and further examine their work to ensure that their speech is powerful and persuasive. A kindergarten literacy plan includes the same “Connection” section and explains how students will take the books they drafted in the previous lesson and edit their work to prepare it to be presented to an audience.

- Whole group lessons for grade level content, and small group strategy lessons are used to differentiate and provide multiple entry points for all learners including English language learners and students with disabilities. For example, one kindergarten plan reflects three different learning groups; one using colored bears to subtract, another using cubes to add, while another group added and subtracted without manipulatives. Grouping was based on student data collected during previous lessons. Lesson plans include a variety of scaffolds that ensure that all students can participate in the same high-level rigorous lessons. A second-grade writing lesson offers students various booklets to support individualized writers, writing folders that include students’ individual goals and checklists, along with sentence starters and accountable talk stems to assist students to engage in groups and partner discussions.

- Common Core aligned units of study that integrate the instructional shifts are evident throughout planning documents. Writing is a focus area and is integrated across subjects. Staff recently made the decision to discontinue the “Writing like a Scientist” unit and replaced it with the “Up the Ladder” unit, which engages students in conducting research and writing nonfiction. Math units and lesson plans include a strong writing component to ensure that students will write responses to equations and word problems using academic vocabulary. In addition, because poetry is a way of narrating, staff recently made the decision to adjust the first-grade curriculum map by moving the poetry unit to the end of the year to align with the narrative writing unit.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
Teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and incorporate the belief that students learn best when they engage in student-to-student dialogue.

Impact
Student work products and discussions across classrooms reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- During a fifth-grade math lesson, students engaged in dialogue working in groups to create a poster that would be used for a gallery walk. Students’ posters attempted to explain and illustrate how “Four jumps were equal to eight steps.” Students could be overheard stating, “I think I have a strategy we can use” and also clearly explaining to each other as to whether or not the strategy would work. During a third-grade dual language reading class students worked in groups to create a tool that would convince people to read their book. Rich discussions took place in Spanish as students created evidenced based reasons for selecting a particular book to read.

- Writing in all curriculum areas and across all grades is an instructional focus. Student writing consistently reflects the use of citing text-based evidence and academic vocabulary. In addition, students use writing as a way to voice their opinions and advocate for themselves. Students recently wrote essays to the principal sharing why they believed they needed a larger playground. Students’ argument was that they are constantly “bumping into each other” on the playground and since the equipment is old that new equipment is safer and lasts longer. Recently, students in the lower grades wrote letters to the upper grade students explaining why running in the hallways was unsafe for them. They logically articulated that because they are smaller and not as strong they could get hurt. Their ability to explain this in writing indicated the high levels of thinking and engagement taking place in their classrooms and the positive impact the focus on writing is producing.

- Across classrooms, students’ conversations included responses to teacher-generated questions, as well as higher order thinking questions that allowed students to support their thinking using text-based evidence. For example, students in a first grade classroom created writing pieces that required students to grab the reader’s attention on a topic, state an opinion, include an example and support that opinion with evidence. Students in a second-grade writing lesson engaged in several discussion sessions with a partner as they worked on editing and revising their written work. As students engaged in discussions, they were heard stating “One of your word wall words is not spelled correctly” and “I think we need to add commas to our informational checklists.” These high levels of student discussion were evidenced across the classrooms visited.
Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high professional and academic expectations to the entire school staff most notably through daily classroom visits and professional development (PD) sessions. School leaders successfully partner with families in supporting student progress and systematically communicate high expectations to all students.

Impact
Throughout the school there is a culture of mutual accountability for all expectations. Parents partner with school staff to support students’ progress and ensure that students own their educational experience.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders share expectations on a daily basis and engage in meaningful and productive conversations with staff. The principal and her team visit classes on a daily basis. Teachers shared how instructional conversations happen daily and they are encouraged to not only have them with school leaders but with each other as well. PD opportunities are another way expectations are shared. According to both teachers and school leaders PD is purposeful. Teachers not only select the PD they wish to take, but they design and develop the PD opportunities directly aligned to the instructional focus. For example, teachers made the decision to switch to a new math program. The teachers have attended PD in order to support the program and the expectations for it to be faithfully implemented. The principal meets regularly with the team of seven model teachers who share and help to disseminate instructional expectations.

- The school effectively uses multiple modalities to reach, inform and interact with families. Every student in the school has a homework folder that is taken home each evening with information for the parents about their child’s progress and upcoming events. Parents attend the monthly “Coffee with the Principal” where the principal reports to them on various aspects of the school and the events in which their help would be needed and welcomed. Teachers frequently communicate to parents through Class Dojo, an online tool. Parents receive updates on their children via text messages in real-time enabling parents to feel as if they are in the classroom with their children. The high school articulation process is fully supported through meetings addressing the application process with advice related to selecting the appropriate high school for their child. When parents were asked what they liked most about this school, several noted the effective ways the school communicates.

- Students are prepared for high school and college and careers from the time students enter kindergarten. One of the primary tools all learners develop is confidence and voice. When students were asked how they know how they are doing in school, several students responded, “We ask our teachers to tell us.” Readiness for college and career is provided through special after school clubs. Students learn technology skills, such as coding as well as social skills found in the school’s newspaper club. The school has established a partnership with Queens College that allows students opportunities to visit the campus and experience what it is like to be in a college classroom. Furthermore, students participate in trips to local middle schools where they have opportunities to ask questions and experience the feeling of middle school. Thus, they are provided concrete understandings of what is expected of them and are ready for their next level.
Findings
The vast majority of teachers engages in professional inquiry-based collaborations. Distributed leadership roles, including model teachers are embedded throughout the school community.

Impact
There is strengthened instructional teacher capacity that has resulted in school-wide instructional coherence and increased student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has seven model teachers who actively work with school leaders to support teacher peers. School leaders meet regularly with them to discuss curricula, pedagogy and to ensure there is alignment across all grades and subject areas. Teachers conduct a large amount of the PD offered at the school as a result of their attending off-site PD and share their learning. Most recently they conducted a PD on de-escalation training. Additionally, teachers take leadership roles during team meetings. They present and share student data from their classes so it can be analyzed and next steps can be developed and implemented that address student learning gaps.

- Teachers work in vertical and horizontal teams. According to school leaders and teachers it has positively impacted teachers’ instructional capacity. During the teacher meeting, they expressed their strong belief that the teamwork has impacted their professional practice making them better teachers. One teacher stated, “It has helped us learn to work together much more cohesively”. In addition, teachers address interdisciplinary connections and learn about the other disciplines, as they get to work closely with the staff members from the other areas. Additionally, teachers and school leaders are proud that teachers regularly intervisit their colleagues to support and learn from each other. Teachers are often times asked to visit a colleague that is stronger in a particular area to help support that teacher in an area that has been indicated as an area in need of improvement. This work has led to improved teacher practice as evidenced in teacher Advance data. There was a 12 percent increase in domain 1a in 2017-2018 where teachers moved from 29 percent highly effective to 41 percent highly effective.

- Teachers are given the opportunity to provide input regarding decisions that impact curricula. There is one teacher from each grade level that is a member of the school’s dual language team. This team regularly makes decisions that impact not only the dual language program, but all other grades and subject areas as well. For example, teachers recently overhauled the libraries for each grade to ensure libraries were leveled according to students’ reading levels and interests. Additionally, kindergarten teachers recently decided to realign site words for kindergarten students to match reading levels. Adjustments such as these have led to students improving their performance. The most recent data from state assessments indicate that 54 percent of students are at proficiency, eight percent higher than comparable schools in the district.