



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning**

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Edward R. Murrow High School

High School K525

**1600 Avenue L
Brooklyn
NY 11230**

Principal: Allen Barge

**Date of review: April 21, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Adam Breier**

The School Context

Edward R. Murrow High School is a high school with 3,895 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 26% Asian, 23% Black, 21% Hispanic, and 28% White students. The student body includes 7% English Language Learners and 18% students with disabilities. Boys account for 41% of the students enrolled and girls account for 59%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 91.5%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
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	Additional Findings	Proficient
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 <i>Framework for Teaching</i> , aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	Focus	Proficient
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	Additional Findings	Proficient
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Additional Findings	Well Developed
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Celebration	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations. Across the school, grade teams meet on a consistent basis to analyze assessment data, student work products, and to share teaching strategies.

Impact

Teacher engagement in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations has strengthened their instructional capacity and promoted implementation of the instructional shifts. Systematic analysis of student data and work products has resulted in mastery of goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers reported that as a result of the work conducted by the social studies teacher team in its analysis and comparison of the Document Based Question (DBQ) from the 2014 to the 2015 school year Regents Exams, students' scores showed gains. Consequently, teachers across the content areas are now utilizing the TEAL (Topic sentence, Examples and Evidence, Analysis, Link) paragraph-writing format that was instrumental in supporting students' improvement. Teachers also reported as an outgrowth of work conducted by a collection of teacher teams, the decision was made to support students' reading of college and career ready texts; they now use a common support titled Annotation Station. This resource codifies symbols students are to use as they annotate a text. The different symbols represent the following: important information: key words, new vocabulary, something confusing or you have a question about, make a connection, and agree/disagree. The Annotation Station support was available and evidence of its use was observed in all classes.
- During a grade 9 English Language Arts (ELA) teacher team meeting, student work samples were analyzed to assess TEAL paragraph writing format use. Discussion of student work also covered impact of use of the Annotation Station supports. After reading one sample of student work, one teacher said, "Most of the students have TEAL down now. They've gotten the format. This student has come a long way." The second sample of student work was then read. After this, a teacher shared, "I think the TEAL paragraphs are being helped by the Annotation Stations. This student used TEAL and the organization is great. The student also has improved in using evidence because of the Annotation Station."
- The geometry teacher team analyzed student results on question 1 from the June 2015 Common Core Geometry Regents Exam. Analysis showed that a majority of students who answered incorrectly chose the same response, showing that they commonly misunderstood the question. One teacher shared a strategy that involved taping a triangle shaped piece of paper to a pencil and twisting it so that when rotated it gave the visual impression of a cone. This strategy was used to illustrate the meaning of "rotate" as intended in the question stem. After team-wide utilization of this strategy, there was 100% improvement in a similarly worded question issued to students for the purpose of assessing the team's targeted instructional adjustment.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best. Across classrooms, student work products reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

Although students are strategically grouped, and their work products reflect high levels of thinking, teaching practices result in teacher-centered instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Discussion techniques were observed in less than a majority of classes. In a communication arts class, students were working in groups, each representing a different country, working to write their respective responses to their roles in the Rwandan genocide. Each group was engaged in discussion while students fulfilled their group roles in completing this project. In another social studies class, students worked in pairs to determine whether the Aztec civilization was advanced. All pairs were observed actively discussing questions and issues pertaining to the culture, archeological accomplishments, and trade practices of the Aztecs.
- However, even though school leadership identified the use of “effective discussion techniques” as important teaching practices, a majority of classes observed were teacher-centered, without the use of discussion techniques. Specifically, during a social studies class, students directly responded to questions about John F. Kennedy’s (JFK) legacy posed by the teacher without engaging in discussion with peers. In a geometry class, the teacher asked, “Who would like to share the answer to #1?”, to which one student replied. The teacher responded with the follow-up question “What was the point of finding CD?” to which one student replied. Students neither responded to each other nor discussed answers with each other.
- Review of student work products across the school revealed students’ high levels of thinking. Some examples are “James K. Polk based his power of expansion in Manifest Destiny which was the belief that it was the nation’s God-given right to expand according to its needs.” In a piece about the impact of Reconstruction, one student wrote, “Black families rented from White and raised crops. However, they weren’t able to sell crops to anyone except their landlords. Blacks could not sell their own crops to make profit for themselves.” In a piece about the presidency of Thomas Jefferson, one student wrote, “The Louisiana Purchase was the largest land transaction for the United States and the most important event of President Jefferson’s presidency. At the end of the French and Indian War, France had given up its claims to the lands west of the Mississippi. However, when Napoleon came to power, he took back the Louisiana lands from Spain. News of this transaction alarmed the president and the Republicans for they feared the French would take control over the trade centered on the Mississippi River and the city of New Orleans.”

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core State Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

Impact

Curricula are coherent and promote college and career readiness. Additionally, curricula emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills across grades and subjects.

Supporting Evidence

- Review of curricular documents revealed alignment to the Common Core State Standards and New York State content standards where applicable, as well as integration of the instructional shifts across grades and content areas. Evidence of integration of the instructional shifts in English Language Arts/Literacy, math and in other curricula such as Western World Literature, grade 9 Communication Arts, grade 10 Humanities, Psychology and Literature, and Contemporary Literature, Living Environment, and Geometry, included either the TEAL (Topic sentence, Examples and Evidence, Analysis, Link) paragraph-writing framework, or the application of real world situations.
- Unit plans consistently challenge students to utilize rigorous habits in the course of instruction. Learning plan statements in unit plans include, “Analyze the multiple central ideas and reflect on how they interact with each other”, “Discuss the main character’s relationship with nature and cite examples”, and “Create interpretive and responsive texts to demonstrate knowledge and a sophisticated understanding of the connections between life and the literary work.” Additionally, students are to consistently write and subsequently edit their writing to ensure mechanics and grammar are correct and appropriate, and are regularly writing using the TEAL format to complete five paragraph essays and to use the Modern Language Association (MLA) format when directly and indirectly quoting from sources as evidence. Lesson plans consistently detailed high-level questions. Examples of higher-order questions found in curricular documents are, “How are the values of a culture reflected in its art and literature?”, “How do poets express theme through self & identity?”, “Explain the theorem regarding segments formed by intersecting chords”, “In your opinion, what connection exists between transformations and congruence?”, and “Analyze how imbalances in the heating of Earth’s surface create weather patterns.”
- Samples of reviewed performance task assessments showed an emphasis on rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills across the grades and subjects, while also ensuring access by (ELLs) and students with disabilities. For example, adapted versions of *Frankenstein*, *Macbeth*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, are available for ELLs and students with disabilities in the Western World Literature class. The grade 9 Communication Arts curriculum indicates the use of graphic novel versions of *Gilgamesh*, *The Odyssey*, and *Oedipus*. Modified worksheets and graphic organizers are also available for both ELLs and students with disabilities.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments and grading policies aligned with the school's curricula. School leaders and teachers use common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas.

Impact

Teachers provide students with actionable feedback regarding student achievement. Assessment data is used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, samples of student work products showed teacher written actionable feedback directing students to the steps they should take to strengthen their work. Some examples of that feedback were: "You aren't really convincing me that you believe in your argument. Remember, you need to convince the reader", "Watch your verb tenses. You are switching between present and past", "The details give this voice and readability. I am impressed! Be careful of run-on sentences", and "Combine to create a more concise topic sentence."
- Benchmark assessment data drive curricular changes across grades and subject areas. Using data from the Common Core Geometry Regents exam, the following analyses and changes were made: the "Solids: Surface Area" unit was extended, the "Solids: Volume" unit was left unchanged, and the "Dilated Segments" unit was separated from the unit on "Transformations as dilations is not a rigid motion." In addition, the math team determined that 80% of students answered question number 2 from the January 2016 Regents Exam incorrect. Identification of the possible stumbling blocks to student understanding and the subsequent adjustments to instruction resulted in 94% of students answering the question correctly as evidenced by data from a follow-up assessment.
- Social studies teacher teams used Global Studies and U.S. History Regents Exam data to adjust materials to meet specific student need. For students still needing to pass the Global Studies exam, an analysis of those students' past exam results is conducted. Results of this analysis are used to plan individualized supports for all students that are then embedded into students' individual current social studies coursework. Identical processes are in place for students still needing to pass the U.S. History Regents Exam. This data is also used to adjust curricula for respective courses. Analysis of the January 2016 Global Studies exam results revealed that students struggle with the thematic essay portion. Three units of the Global Studies curriculum were modified to include instruction designed to meet student need in this area in the form of supports specific to fostering student understanding of thematic questions and organizing the resulting written response.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff. Additionally, school leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

Staff maintains and benefits from a culture of mutual accountability around high expectations. Partnerships with families support students in their progress toward college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct frequent classroom observations and provide feedback utilizing the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* as the standard for professionalism and high quality instruction. Each rated item on classroom observation reports includes language from the Danielson rubric along with specific detailed evidence from the observed class to support the rating. Next steps for teacher improvement are included at the close of each observation report. Additionally, teacher teams maintain a regular schedule of intervisitations, while school leadership and teachers maintain a public document in their Google Docs platform that details, for each teacher, a professional development (PD) plan that includes the following sections: “Goals”, “Activities to Further Growth”, “Resources/Supports”, “Notes”, and a “Log of Supports” that includes narrative statements detailing the impact of PD measures on teacher practice. One example is “Improvement in allowing for classroom discussion observed. Improvement noted with questioning.”
- All staff members use tools such as the school’s website, newsletters, emails, texts, and a “Family Guide” booklet, to communicate high expectations to all students and families. Additionally, through one-to-one meetings with guidance counselors and other staff, families receive information about the progress of their children and ways to support the college preparation process. School documents show alerts to families whose children do not create a mandatory account on Naviance, an online portal with information and resources to move students through the college application process, creating home–school partnerships that support students towards meeting expectations for everyone to attend college. Graduation tracking reports from Naviance and Skedula show increasingly higher levels of scholarship, continued acceptance of many students to top colleges, and millions of dollars in scholarship awards to graduating seniors.
- During the student meeting all students shared that staff members keep families informed about their children’s progress in meeting expectations through scholarship reports, data on PupilPath, and letters with course guidelines and grading policies. Several students described events such as families participating in college fairs, college planning workshops, College Now presentations, and visiting the College Office, where all families receive guidance about financial aid and steps to work on with their children. The principal noted that current data showing 82% of eligible students graduating within four years is largely due to the many ways in which the school cultivates partnerships with families and others.