NYC Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Emolior Academy

Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 12X383

1970 West Farms Rd.
Bronx
NY 10460

Principal: Michael Abbey

Dates of Review:
December 20, 2016 - December 21, 2016

Lead Reviewer: Lenneen Gibson

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

Emolior Academy 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.

School Quality Ratings

Instructional Core		
To what extent does the school...	**Area**	**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 Finding**	**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 Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	**Additional Finding**	**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	**Area of Focus**	**Proficient**

School Quality Ratings continued

School Culture

To what extent does the school...	Area	Rating
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults	**Additional Finding**	**Proficient**
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	**Area of Celebration**	**Well Developed**

Systems for Improvement

To what extent does the school...	Area	Rating
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	**Additional Finding**	**Proficient**
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	**Additional Finding**	**Proficient**
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	**Additional Finding**	**Proficient**
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	**Additional Finding**	**Proficient**
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	**Additional Finding**	**Proficient**

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	**3.4 High Expectations**	**Rating:**	**Well Developed**

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the school community through lesson planning support, defining rigor, and intervisitations with mutual accountability for those expectations. A clear path connected to college and career readiness for families is conveyed through workshops and the Emolier, an online application.

Impact

High expectations for instructional practices and communication connected to college and career readiness are effectively conveyed to the school community. Strong partnerships with families support student progress toward achievement and preparation for high school.

Supporting Evidence

- Expected teaching practices and philosophies are communicated and are aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. The school community collaborated with one another to define the word rigor as it pertains to their school. This was captured in a document entitled, "How is Rigor defined at Emolior Academy? What evidence represents rigor?" The document provides the context for defining rigor by delineating the school's problem of practice, theory of action, and instructional focus. Expectations for lesson planning are shared with the staff through a series of lesson plan clinics as well as a whole staff professional development workshop entitled, "The Rigorous Lesson Plan." As a result of this work, the school has implemented a lesson plan template, which was evident in lesson plans reviewed.

- Through the use of Teacher Ease, the school's website and the school's very own Emolier App, parents and students are kept informed of their grades. The online application sends daily notifications to the parents regarding student progress, and schoolwide events. The school conducts outreach to parents through phone calls, weekly parent engagement meetings, teacher calendars, and the student handbook. Additional events such as "Mommy and Me Tea," "Bring Dads to School," back to school nights, coffee night with the parents, and trading places are provided for families. During trading places, parents follow their child's schedule. During the parent meeting, parents stated that the parent engagement meetings are helpful because they are not only alerted if students are not performing well academically, but are notified about positive student performance. During the teacher meeting, teachers stated they send texts out to the parents to keep them abreast of their child's academic progress.

- School leaders provide the faculty a staff handbook that explains the expectations for all members of the school community. In addition, they receive the Staff Weekly newsletter and the principal regularly hosts clinics in instructional delivery, classroom gallery walks, and assessments. The principal conducted a professional development session correlating the components of *The Framework for Great Schools* to the concepts of rigorous instruction, collaborative teachers, and supportive environment. The workshop provided teachers with tools such as video visitation. School leaders implemented an "Engaging Students in Learning Video Visitation Protocol" that teachers can use during intervisitation. During the teacher meeting, teachers shared the focus on rigor is resulting in students engaging in more challenging tasks and teachers supporting one another to have this goal realized.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

Assessment practices align to the school's curricula and consistently reflect the use of checks for understanding and student self-evaluation.

Impact

Students receive actionable feedback regarding their academic achievements. Classroom practices, such as checks for understanding and student self-assessment, are employed to meet the needs of all learners, but as of yet have not offered a clear portrait of student mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- In an English as a New Language (ENL) class, students used an image analysis chart and the teacher conferenced with students in their learning groups posing questions to each member. In addition, the teacher polled the class by asking a question and counting the number of hands that were raised. In an eighth grade self-contained mathematics class, the teacher used the thumbs up, thumbs down strategy to check for understanding. As the students worked on a problem, the teacher conferenced with individual students and kept conference notes. Although the teacher maintained these notes, this practice did not always lead to on-the-spot adjustments to the lesson.

- In a mathematics class, as the students were developing their equations, the teacher walked around and conferenced with each group and kept a journal for the group conferences. The teacher continued to check for understanding by asking the group specific questions such as, "What is the first step?" "What is this process called?" The teacher changed one of the groups to an infinite solutions group. The students were self-assessing one another in their groups using a group presentation rubric. However, this practice was not seen across the vast majority of classrooms.

- Teachers create assessments and rubrics that provide students with actionable feedback. For an eighth grade mathematics task students were assessed using a four-tiered rubric. Based on their performance students were identified as novice, apprentice, practitioner, or expert. The assignment also included a self-assessment component with the teacher providing feedback with specific next steps. In an eighth grade science class, the lab report was evaluated using a rubric, which also included a student self-evaluation. Teacher feedback was specific and commended the descriptiveness of each component of the report along with next steps regarding labeling the units on the x-axis of the graph. A sixth grade social studies writing task utilized a rubric and the teacher's feedback advised the student to include more examples to support the evidence, and proof-read work to avoid capitalization errors. Although the feedback provided students was actionable and meaningful, the feedback did not advance student learning towards mastery.

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

School leaders ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula are planned and refined based on students' strengths and weaknesses.

Impact

Curricula are aligned to the Common Core, and purposefully modified to build coherence. All students are cognitively engaged resulting in their college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has adopted Atlas Rubicon in order to build a common language and promote coherence for the schoolwide curricula. To ensure the alignment of the Common Core Learning Standards the school uses Code X, *Expeditionary Learning,* and EngageNY for English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics curricula respectively. Providing students a balance of informational and literacy texts is a shift this school year. The rationale is based on the analysis of performance data that indicates that English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities are plateauing between levels 1.5 and 2.99 in ELA. Guided and independent reading is now embedded in the sixth and seventh grade curricula with the expectation of an increase in performance by all students. In mathematics, data analysis led to a decision to focus on deeper understanding of content with students being required to demonstrate their knowledge.

- Eighth grade ELA unit plans were revised after a review indicated they were not aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. Since the incorporation of the Atlas Rubicon and with the assistance of a literacy coach, the unit plans are now aligned and incorporate the instructional shifts. A review of one of the unit plans stated the following, "Scholars will develop an argument to support their claim. They will compile evidence using multiple sources, both fiction and non-fiction." Previously, students were addressing grammar and parts of speech. The refinement has led to tasks that require cognitive engagement by all students.

- The principal stated that modifications were made to the mathematics curriculum to provide an increase in problem-based questions. An eighth grade unit plan includes students writing verbal descriptions of a graph. In a sixth grade unit there has been an infusion of real world problems. For example, a performance task requires students to demonstrate a real world situation through the use of graphing points in all four quadrants of a coordinate plane.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

Teaching strategies, such as the use of scaffolds and the schoolwide point of entry model, provide multiple access points into the curricula for all students as evidenced in student work products.

Impact

Student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thought and participation making student thinking visible. Teaching strategies provide multiple entry points into the curricula so that all learners are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- In a social studies English as a New Language (ENL) class, students were sitting in collaborative groups and analyzing an image of a Native American on a cliff. In the groups, a discussion ensued in which the students shared their inferences with one another about the image. Some students inferred the spear implied he was a warrior. Another student suggested the male was looking at other people in the country because he was on a cliff. Students completed an "Image Analysis Chart," requiring them to write down their inferences. In an ELA Special Education Teacher Support Service Class (SETSS), students were to discern which evidence cited from *Call Me Maria* was most effective in analyzing the text. Students conducted a turn and talk and discussed their rationale as to why analysis one or analysis two was most effective. Students captured their thoughts on a worksheet that mapped out the evidence from the text along with the analysis chosen.

- In a mathematics class, students were engaged in adding and subtracting rational numbers. Students within a group were observed modeling the solution for a member of the group. In another mathematics class, students were working in groups and reviewed the previous night's homework as well as correcting one another's work. A student asked his peer how he derived his answer. The student noted the answer was incorrect and stated the correct answer as well as explained to his partner how he solved the problem correctly.

- Teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula to ensure that all students are cognitively engaged. In a mathematics class, students received differentiated tasks based on the results of a polling quiz administered previously. The task ranged from low to high with the lowest task utilizing more visual representations to solve the problem and the high level task using less scaffolding in the questions. In a social studies class, students received differentiated texts from authors Upton Sinclair and Jacob Riis. Using a graphic organizer, students used evidence from the article to determine if it was persuasive or informational. Additionally, students were assigned their group based on the Degree of Reading Power (DRP) assessment. In another math class, students grouped according to their iReady diagnostic tests and unit assessments worked on differentiated tasks to create their own multistep equation that had criteria ranging from no solution to many solutions.

Quality Indicator:	4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

Teachers are observed regularly through ongoing cycles of classroom observations that capture the teacher's strengths, challenges, and next steps.

Impact

Feedback to teachers provides specific expectations for the improvement of their practice and results in supporting their professional development.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct ongoing classroom observations and provide feedback containing next steps to strengthen their teaching. The current year's observation calendar indicates the minimal number of observations teachers require, those teachers in need of additional observations, and new teachers in need of mentoring. The majority of the teachers will be observed four times during the school year with notations to conduct additional observations where needed. The principal stated that there are plans to conduct a fifth observation for teachers to provide them with additional support as indicated.

- Teachers receive feedback from school leaders and coaches. Consultants from various companies support the teachers and implement the feedback in a timely and effective manner. Data indicated a need to focus on mid-lesson assessment strategies. The feedback provided teachers included using a system to check for understanding for individual and groups of students through a tracker or a conferencing binder. In another instance, the feedback recommended use of an exit ticket, a student self-assessment rubric, or an end of the lesson journal writing activity. The recommendations align with advancing visibility of student thinking. Similarly, the principal stated the feedback provided to students needs to be in real time and this will be messaged to teachers as an observational outcome.

- Curricula and planning are additional areas that needed to be addressed. Feedback in this area encompassed using the school's customized lesson plan suggestion guide to develop a well-structured plan. Conducting an intervisitation was suggested to one teacher. In this particular case, the lesson plan lacked components such as an essential question and a do now. Feedback referred to these missing parts and included specific actions for the teacher to take to ensure improvement.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

Teachers use a customized protocol to engage in structured inquiry based professional collaborations to analyze the work products of those students they share.

Impact

These professional collaborations promote the Common Core Learning Standards and result in strengthening the instructional capacity of teachers leading to improved student achievement schoolwide.

Supporting Evidence

- A grade seven inter-disciplinary teacher team engaged in inquiry work that involved using a customized protocol. Each teacher analyzed three student samples of an ELA task based on the student's reading of *Call Me Maria.* Teachers determined which quartile, ranging from one to four, the student's work aligned with using specific evidence from the student's assessment. The teachers shared their findings with one another, as well as, the trends and patterns of students' understanding and misconception of the task. Furthermore, teachers selected an area of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* to reteach those students whose work was assessed in the lowest quartile. Next steps included: developing entrance activities that explicitly link task and organization, targeting transition words across content areas, and re-teaching essay organization structure. A review of the teacher team document showed that a similar plan was constructed for students in quartile four.

- The school has a structured collaborative inquiry team. Grade level teachers meet weekly to analyze student work, and create action plans to support student academic performance. In addition, as evidenced in the School Self Evaluation Form, weekly meetings of the content team include teachers across disciplines who analyze commonalities between their subject areas, provide feedback on task development and engage in lesson study. The instructional cabinet that is an amalgamation of administrators and teacher leaders from all teams meet to analyze school data.

- In an effort to ensure that the work of teams would affect student learning, a "Teacher Team Engagement Plan" was developed. The team's work addressed differentiation of lesson practices across the grade, aligning supportive practices for a variety of learners, and planning an intra-grade culture-building event rooted in academic achievement. The team constructed a nine point action plan that incorporated collaboratively analyzing State mathematics and ELA data, planning intervisitations that focus on the trends and patterns gleaned from the analysis, incorporating additional writing assessments, and using the results from the DRP. Implementation of these practices resulted in an increase in the volume of student reading, improved grammar usage, and heightened teacher awareness of their classroom practices.