

# Quality Review Report

## 2018-2019

**Yorkville East Middle School**

**Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 02M177**

**1458 York Avenue  
Manhattan  
NY 10075**

**Principal: Christina Riggio**

**Dates of Review:  
February 28, 2019 - March 1, 2019**

**Lead Reviewer: Edward Hazen**

## 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

Yorkville East Middle School 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		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	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	Area of Focus	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	Additional Finding	Well Developed

## School Quality Ratings continued

<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Rating</b>
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults	<b>Additional Finding</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Additional Finding</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Rating</b>
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	<b>Additional Finding</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Additional Finding</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Additional Finding</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	<b>Area of Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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	<b>Additional Finding</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

Teacher teams use common planning time to systematically analyze classroom practice, student work, and assessment data. The teachers engage in inquiry-based, professional collaborations by department, embedding the Common Core Learning Standards (Common Core) into units of study.

### Impact

Across classes, teacher teams' use of a structured protocol to analyze data and student work products, has promoted implementation of the Common Core and instructional shifts and resulted in schoolwide instructional coherence, strengthened teacher instructional capacity, and improved student achievement.

### Supporting Evidence

- The vast majority of teachers engage in inquiry-based work via department team professional collaboration groups. Teacher teams use the Looking at Student Work protocol to review student work products and analyze assessment data, to make curricula improvements aligned to the schoolwide goals of utilizing the workshop model of instruction and providing differentiated instruction and tiered interventions to students. Teachers collaborate to create rigorous lessons to have students engage in purposeful academic tasks and authentic discussions, emphasizing high levels of thinking to promote the adoption of college and career readiness skills. Teachers also identify a problem of practice and engage in inquiry work to examine the impact of specific instructional strategies on student achievement. After the revision of units of study and lessons, strategies are put into practice in the classroom and the teams reconvene to assess which strategies had an impact on student learning. Strategies identified as effective in addressing a gap in achievement are then shared across grades and disciplines. In addition, teachers are encouraged to observe a colleague's lesson so that they too can implement the strategies, resulting in schoolwide instructional coherence.
- Teachers reported that common collaboration time has had a positive impact on their professional practice and student learning, as they have time to share and discuss specific pedagogical strategies and practices that can be used to improve student engagement. Teachers reported analyzing running records, content-specific benchmark assessments, and informal assessments, such as on-demand writing tasks and exit tickets, to determine if students were making adequate progress towards mastery of content area standards and the acquisition of Common Core skills. For example, across subjects, teacher teams analyze work samples to determine if students can develop claims and counterclaims with enough supporting textual evidence, when writing an argumentative essay. Teachers noted that this work led to revisions to the scope and sequence, to better support students in their argumentative writing, and to the addition of supports for students with disabilities to push them to use academic language and accountable talk. Consequently, these groups made progress towards the schoolwide goal of increasing student engagement in high levels of discourse and writing in all grades and classes. This was evidenced by a 21 percentage points increase in the number of students with disabilities meeting proficiency on the New York State English Language Arts (NYSELA) assessment, with scores moving from 25 percent in 2017 to 46 percent in 2018.
- Teacher teams meet regularly to analyze student assessment data from a variety of sources, including New York State exams. Teachers also administer end-of-unit assessments to provide teacher teams with baseline data about student performance, which informs changes to curricula and instruction. The data is used to create instructional groups and provide targeted interventions for struggling students. These practices resulted in 73 percent of all students meeting or exceeding proficiency on the NYSELA assessment in 2018, compared to 64 percent in 2017.

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

The school leader and faculty ensure alignment of curricula to the Common Core, through the implementation of the instructional shifts across grades and subjects. With support from department coordinators and other professional learning specialists, teachers use student work and data to plan and revise academic tasks for all learners.

### Impact

Curricula and academic tasks are designed to build coherence across disciplines and support college and career readiness for all students, including those with diverse learning needs. However, lesson plans do not fully support all students, including the highest achieving students, in accessing cognitively engaging curricula and tasks.

### Supporting Evidence

- A review of curricula across grades and subjects offers evidence of teacher teamwork to align the curricula to the schoolwide belief about how students learn best, while integrating the Common Core and instructional shifts in English Language Arts (ELA), math, social studies, and science. School leaders and faculty adopted the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) and Passport curricula, to provide students with engaging and relevant academic tasks in ELA and social studies, respectively. Across subjects and grade levels, students are required to develop arguments and cite enough supporting textual evidence to justify their stance on an issue, when making a claim or defending an argument. Teachers plan culturally responsive units of study, incorporating relevant texts, current events, and social justice issues, allowing students to engage in text-based discussions and to write from multiple sources to make arguments, while promoting the adoption of academic vocabulary. A review of lesson plans shows that teachers also promote student adoption of academic vocabulary by incorporating into their plans, prompts that encourage accountable talk and the use of academic language.
- Staff members meet weekly to work in collaborative teams that review and revise curriculum maps, scope and sequences, and units of study, to determine best methods for a variety of learners to have access to the curricula and tasks. Teachers analyze student work samples and assessment data, including results of mid-and end-of-unit assessments, reading assessments, and running-records, to refine lesson plans and curricula to include supports such as scaffolds and differentiated tasks. Department coordinators and professional development specialists meet with individual teachers and teacher teams, to examine the impact of their grade-level teamwork, and their use of strategies such as Universal Design for Learning, (UDL) when planning lessons to best support students' diverse learning needs.
- A review of meeting minutes and agendas indicates that grade-team meetings focus on creating student-centered lessons that provide whole-class and individualized supports, through differentiation of tasks and enrichment for students. Teachers use data to create action plans for students who struggle, and revisit interventions that are put in place to assess students' progress towards meeting benchmarks. Using the UDL model, Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) teachers meet to plan lessons based on the needs of students, to ensure access to the curricula via scaffolding and differentiation. However, a review of lesson plans indicated that all teachers do not yet strategically and consistently plan instructional units with a variety of tasks for all groups of students, including the highest-achieving students, to be cognitively engaged.

## Additional Finding

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Teaching practices reflect school-identified best practices that are aligned to the school's belief about how students learn best. Teachers utilize structures and protocols such as the workshop model, questioning, and student-centered discussions, as multiple entry points to lessons with challenging tasks for a diversity of learners.

### Impact

Across grades and subjects, teaching practices provide students with learning tasks that result in work products that show the application of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Students consistently demonstrate high levels of participation in discussions that foster active listening, as they engage in inquiry, collaboration, and debates across classrooms.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across grades and subjects, teaching practices illustrated the school's instructional foci, that align with schoolwide beliefs about how students learn best. The school's leadership team selected the TCRWP student-centered, gradual release model of instruction, to ensure that teachers differentiate instruction and address students' individualized learning styles, needs, and modalities. These observed practices, which encourage instruction in small, ability-based groups or student activity stations, provided students with access to scaffolds such as manipulatives, graphic organizers, and visuals, thereby reflecting the gradual release model of instruction. Across most classrooms visited, the teachers used differentiated instruction to create multiple entry points into the lesson. However, in some classes, specialized instructional protocols to further challenge students identified as performing above grade level, were not evident.
- Across classrooms visited, teachers used strategies such as inquiry, collaborative learning, questioning, and discussions to foster higher order student thinking. Teachers assigned rigorous activities and used scaffolding techniques to provide entry points into lessons and academic tasks for a variety of learners. To begin an ICT seventh grade math lesson, the teachers modeled how to solve word inequalities problems, prior to students transitioning to ability-based groups to solve differentiated problem sets with a peer, while also receiving one-on-one intervention and coaching from the teachers, as needed. In a co-taught ELA/ICT class, the teachers used modeling to demonstrate how to analyze texts to determine how the theme changes over time, before directing some students to work independently while the co-teachers provided small group instruction to students who needed additional support.
- In most observed classes, students engaged in structured group or partner work requiring high levels of collaborative thinking and discussion. Students were accountable for engaging in collaborative tasks and contributing to the work of the cooperative learning groups. For example, in a social studies class, students participating in a Socratic seminar used a score card to track their level of participation in the discussion, while the teacher took student engagement notes to measure the level of active listening and discourse by individual students. In a math lesson, students participated in a gallery walk to cooperatively solve word problems by creating algebraic expressions. Students stated that they were aware of the group work expectations and their individual roles for engaging in the discussions with peers.

## Additional Finding

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

The vast majority of teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and checklists that align with the curricula and provide a clear portrait of student mastery of concepts taught. Teachers use data from common assessments, such as running records, to create a clear picture of student progress towards goals, track student progress, and adjust curricula and instruction.

### Impact

The use of rubrics and assessments provides actionable and meaningful feedback, to students and teachers, about student achievement. Informed adjustments to curricula and instruction result in all students demonstrating increased mastery of academic goals.

### Supporting Evidence

- The vast majority of teachers use assessments and writing rubrics that align to the Common Core, to provide timely, actionable, meaningful, and accurate feedback to students, on their progress and next steps for improvement. Students reported that the use of TCRWP rubrics and checklists allows them to monitor their progress toward mastery of the writing progressions across content areas. Students were able to identify where they were on the progress toward mastery continuum and the next steps required to improve their writing. For example, some students indicated that they had received feedback from teachers that stated that they needed to include stronger supporting textual evidence to improve their arguments. Other students cited feedback that identified creating a stronger thesis or theory statement and using academic language, as their next steps to achieve mastery.
- Teachers use a variety of common assessments to create a clear picture of student progress towards goals across grades and disciplines. Data is used to identify students performing at, below, and above benchmark levels in each content area, and to develop action plans that include targeted instructional strategies that accelerate learning for all students and to close achievement gaps. Grade-level teams analyze multiple data sources, such as TCRWP end-of-unit writing tasks, content-specific diagnostic assessments, and Fountas and Pinnell (F&P) running records, to determine instructional levels and provide student groups with differentiated academic tasks and ability-leveled materials. This also allows supporting teachers to plan academic interventions, via small-group instruction with the classroom teacher, or more intensive intervention with specialized support staff. As a result, the percentage of students meeting or exceeding proficiency on the NYSELA assessment moved from 52 percent in 2016 to 73 percent in 2018.
- Teachers and teacher teams use a variety of assessments to adjust curricula and plan scaffolds and activities that support all learners, including the lowest performing students. Teachers' vertical analysis of data from in-house assessments and New York State math assessments led to the decision to adopt the *New Visions* algebra curriculum and re-align math curricula in grades six and seven to meet the rigor of the Common Core and ensure that all students are prepared for the Regents algebra exam, at the culmination of their eighth-grade year. Similarly, teacher team meeting agendas and minutes indicate that teams analyzed students' short constructed responses from on-demand writing assessments and TCRWP writing samples, to identify patterns and trends among students' responses and to inform next steps for instruction or revisions to curricula. For example, the ELA team revised the scope and sequence of units of TCRWP curricula to better support students who struggled to write a claim that included adequate textual evidence.

## Additional Finding

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

School leadership and faculty consistently communicate, to students and their families, high expectations for learning throughout the school. The school's culture for learning is deeply focused on college and career readiness expectations for all students and includes strong home-school partnerships.

### Impact

Systems of advisement for students and staff partnerships with families, contribute to all students making progress towards college and career readiness goals. Family participation in the learning of their children, via school events such as curriculum nights, results in all students being prepared for the next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and staff implement effective strategies for communicating to all families, high expectations about college and career readiness expectations for their children, and partner with the families to ensure that all students are challenged to meet or exceed those expectations. School leaders and other staff host workshops that engage families in discussions about curricula, pedagogy, and preparation for the next level, with an emphasis on linking the rigor of students' current academic workload to college and career readiness goals. The expectation is for all students to be well prepared for high school, by achieving at or above the targeted proficiency level on the school's benchmark assessments and the NYSELA, math and science assessments, by the end of their time in middle school. As a result of the staff pushing all students towards mastery of relevant standards across content areas, the percentage of students passing ELA and math core courses in 2018 was 99 and 97 percent, respectively. Additionally, 96 percent of the students succeeded in earning all their ninth-grade credits in high school, indicating that during middle school, the students were adequately prepared for the next level.
- There is an active partnership between the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and school leaders and faculty. The PTA partners with school staff to host events such as author lectures, curriculum nights, and college and career workshops, to assist all families in becoming engaged in their children's learning. The PTA also works with school staff to encourage increased family participation in home-school partnerships in teaching and learning, by providing funding for an outside consultant to facilitate additional workshops which parents and faculty identified as being of high interest to families. A review of correspondence from the school indicates that families are regularly invited to learn how to support their children's progress across disciplines, during a weekly Tuesday breakfast hosted by content area teachers. The families reported that these events have provided them with the skills necessary to assist their children with Common Core-related tasks at home and noted that their children are making progress towards all expectations.
- Students and families stated that they are aware of the school's expectations to prepare all students for the secondary level and colleges and careers. Families reported that their children are showing ownership of next-level preparation by being mindful with their work. For example, parents stated that their children are diligent about checking math work for accuracy and applying teachers' feedback to their writing. Students reported that they regularly monitor their progress, using the online grading system, and noted that the student led conference that is held twice per year, requires them to be keenly aware of their progress towards meeting academic goals. Parents expressed appreciation that they can access information about upcoming events and workshops via the school's website and through traditional means. They also praised the school for providing regular opportunities for them to engage in face-to-face conversations with school leaders and teachers, via weekly family engagement meetings focused on curricula, pedagogy, and assessments.



## Additional Finding

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

School leaders support the development of teachers through strategic use of frequent cycles of observations and analysis of student work, to generate feedback about instructional practices. Feedback is aligned to elements of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and addresses strengths, challenges, and next steps for improvement.

### Impact

School leaders' use of an effective system to observe teachers and staff participation in a Learning Partners Program, (LPP) result in feedback that supports teacher practice and professional growth.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school's leadership team has implemented an effective observation cycle that supports the development of teachers and provides effective feedback on pedagogical practices. Additionally, school staff participated in the LPP, working with other schools to share best practices, via informal peer-to-peer collaborations, classroom observations, and collegial feedback. Teachers reported that participation in the LPP, along with feedback from formal observations by school leaders and non-evaluative peer intervisitations, has strengthened their practice, especially in relation to domain three of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, which focuses on classroom instruction. This is reflected in *Advance* data on ratings of teacher observations done during the 2017-2018 school year, in which the staff school scored higher than the citywide average in all three subcomponents of this domain.
- Departmental teams identify best practices and areas of need, which they communicate to school leaders to inform their efforts to support teacher growth. Feedback on areas of need includes the use of questioning techniques and scaffolds to provide multiple entry points into lessons. Feedback on trends and patterns in instruction are shared with teachers during professional collaboration time. In addition, teachers receive feedback via meetings with department coordinators and school leaders, in which they discuss progress towards achieving individual professional goals and additional supports that each teacher might need. A review of teacher observation feedback highlighted comments that clearly articulated next steps for improvement and identified supports to improve the teacher's practice. For example, the next step from an observation of a math lesson advised the teacher to have students demonstrate their understanding, by providing time at the end of the lesson for them to share the big ideas that they had developed collaboratively.
- Along with strategic cycles of observation of instruction, school leaders have established professional learning cycles which serve to support teachers in meeting the articulated instructional foci of the school. Within each cycle, teachers, in conjunction with school leaders, discuss feedback from post-observation sessions and identify specific learning objectives, such as the strengthening of teachers' ability to engage students in the close analysis of text, promote high levels of student discourse, and train students to write purposefully across grades and content areas. School leaders also actively engage teachers in team work to analyze trends in instruction, student achievement data, and student work products, to inform changes to pedagogy that reflect the success of ongoing, schoolwide teacher development activities.