



The University of the State of New York
The State Education Department

2015-16 Demonstrable Improvement Indicator Review (DIIR)

East Lower School

FINAL REPORT

BEDS Code	261600010105
School Name	East Lower School
School Address	1801 East Main Street, Rochester NY
District Name	Rochester City School District
School Leader	Marlene Blocker
Dates of Review	May 26-27, 2016
School Accountability Status	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Persistently Struggling

School Information Sheet for East Lower School

School Configuration (2015-16 data)					
Grade Configuration	6-8	Total Enrollment	403	SIG Recipient	N/A
Types and Number of English Language Learner Classes (2015-16)					
# Transitional Bilingual	0	# Dual Language	35	# Self-Contained English as a Second Language	0
Types and Number of Special Education Classes (2015-16)					
# Special Classes	0	# SETSS	0	# Integrated Collaborative Teaching	0
Types and Number of Special Classes (2015-16)					
# Visual Arts	11	# Music	13	# Drama	0
# Foreign Language	14	# Dance	0	# CTE	0
School Composition (most recent data)					
% Title I Population	100	% Attendance Rate	91.6		
% Free Lunch	87.8	% Reduced Lunch	N/A		
% Limited English Proficient	17.4	% Students with Disabilities	15.4		
Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)					
% American Indian or Alaska Native	.7	% Black or African American	53		
% Hispanic or Latino	30.6	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	3.5		
% White	10.9	% Multi-Racial	1.2		
Personnel (most recent data)					
Years Principal Assigned to School	1	# of Assistant Principals	2.6		
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate	0	% Teaching Out of Certification	0		
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience	46	Average Teacher Absences	5.7		
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2014-15)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	2	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	1		
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (4th Grade)	N/A	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (8th Grade)	19.4		
Student Performance for High Schools (2014-15)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	N/A	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	N/A		
Global History Performance at levels 3 & 4	N/A	US History Performance at Levels 3&4	N/A		
4 Year Graduation Rate	N/A	6 Year Graduation Rate	N/A		
Regents Diploma w/ Advanced Designation	N/A	% ELA/Math Aspirational Performance Measures	N/A		
Overall NYSED Accountability Status					
In Good Standing		Local Assistance Plan			
Priority School	X	Focus School			
SCHOOL PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE SCHOOL:					
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide a social emotional support system for scholars that focuses on understanding behavior differently in light of data that reveals a high number of our scholars coming to school with chronic and complex trauma. 2. Continue to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment with scholar learning. 3. Continued professional learning and implementation of restorative practices for all staff. 4. Improve family engagement by developing pathways for parents and community members to collaboratively create and deliver professional learning for staff. 					

Purpose of the visit

This school was identified as a **Persistently Struggling** school in 2015. In Fall 2015, the New York State Education Department required all districts with Priority Schools designated as Persistently Struggling and/or Struggling to identify the indicators of Demonstrable Improvement for each district's Persistently Struggling and Struggling schools.

One of the measures of Demonstrable Improvement that this school chose was a Tenet on the Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness (DTSDE) rubric. The school chose to be evaluated on Tenet 6, which focuses on Family Engagement. The results of this review, which count ten percent or less towards the school's Demonstrable

Improvement Index, will contribute to the Commissioner’s determinations about the accountability status of the school.

NYSED recognizes that there are dedicated staff members at the school committed to the success of the students. The review team used the DTSDE rubric to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the school’s practices. The review team made its determinations based on the impact of the school’s work as reflected in the DTSDE Tenet.

Information about the review

- The review was co-led by two Outside Educational Experts (OEEs) and a representative from the New York State Education Department (NYSED).
- The review team visited 21 classrooms during the two-day review.
- The OEEs visited 8 classrooms with the school leader during the review.
- Reviewers conducted focus groups with students, staff, and parents.
- Reviewers examined documents provided by the school, including schoolwide data and student work.
- In advance of the review, 22 staff members (49 percent) completed a survey conducted by NYSED.
- In advance of the review, the school provided results of a parent survey that 43 parents completed.
- This is the first year that the school has been a standalone middle school separate from East High School.
- The school is overseen by an Educational Partnership Organization, the University of Rochester. The school leader began the school year as the middle school leader, but was re-assigned to lead both the middle school and the co-located high school in January 2016. Although a new leader has been selected for the middle school, at the time of the review she had not yet assumed the role.

Tenet 6 - Family and Community Engagement: The school creates a culture of partnership where families, community members, and school staff work together to share in the responsibility for student academic progress and social-emotional growth and well-being.

#	Statement of Practice	Stage 4	Stage 3	Stage 2	Stage 1
6.2	The school leader ensures that regular communication with students and families fosters their high expectations for student academic achievement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.3	The school engages in effective planning and reciprocal communication with family and community stakeholders so that student strength and needs are identified and used to augment learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.4	The school community partners with families and community agencies to promote and provide training across all areas (academic and social and emotional developmental health) to support student success.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6.5	The school shares data in a way that promotes dialogue among parents, students, and school community members centered on student learning and success and encourages and empowers families to understand and use data to advocate for appropriate support services for their children.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
TENET 6 OVERALL STAGE:				2	

Tenet 6 - Family and Community Engagement: The school creates a culture of partnership where families, community members, and school staff work together to share in the responsibility for student academic progress and social-emotional growth and well-being.	Tenet Stage	2
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The school is at **Stage Two** for Tenet 6 – Family and Community Engagement.

Summary of Key Findings:

- While the school and district leaders use assorted methods of communication to share the school’s expectations, the leaders have just begun to reflect on the reasons why these strategies have not fully engaged many families or equipped them to partner with the school.
- While the school has begun to use multiple outreach and communication strategies with parents, these are primarily one-sided, and these efforts have not resulted in the school engaging many families.
- The school has not developed or implemented a plan to provide training to parents or staff to build home-school partnerships.
- Although the staff have provided student data to parents and have piloted new strategies to communicate data with families, such as student-led parent conferencing and new internet tools, the staff has yet to ensure that all families fully understand the progress of their children and the steps they can take to help their children improve.

Supporting Evidence:

- While the school and district leaders use assorted methods of communication to share the school’s expectations, the leaders have just begun to reflect on the reasons why these strategies have not fully engaged many families or equipped them to partner with the school. Beginning this school year, the school is now overseen by the University of Rochester, an Educational Partnership Organization (EPO), separate from the district. As part of this transition, the EPO reorganized East High School into East Lower School and East Upper School to provide a targeted approach to meet the unique needs of middle school students. The school leader shared that as a part of its Receivership Continuation Plan, the school convenes a family and community engagement team monthly to organize and monitor school, family, and community partnerships. Based on this plan, the school and district leaders shared that the school held orientation and open house events at the beginning of the school year to distribute parent handbooks and secure commitments to the school’s community promise. Parents interviewed stated that the primary way they learn about what is happening at the school is by attending events, and the parents interviewed indicated that the parents who do not attend events would likely not know what is happening at the school or what the school expects of its students. More than 300 parents, students, and staff attended the events at the beginning of the year, in which attendees were informed about the school’s expectations, and which parents cited as a positive kickoff

to the school year. However parent attendance at events has declined since then, which parents and school leaders attributed to the school's difficulty in identifying topics that were of interest and relevance to families. While leaders and staff have begun to brainstorm additional strategies to meet the needs of parents, such as conducting parent meetings in the parents' neighborhoods, these have not yet been formally planned.

- While the school has begun to use multiple outreach and communication strategies with parents, these are primarily one-sided, and these efforts have not resulted in the school engaging many families. School staff and their community partners have reached out to many families using an internet-based parent portal, teacher webpages, student-led parent conferencing, and home visits. However, teachers and staff inconsistently use these approaches, and leaders and the family and community engagement team inconsistently monitor the implementation and effectiveness of these strategies. Parents interviewed stated that the tools and strategies selected by the school do not match parent needs, as there is an over-dependence on internet-based tools. Parents also stated that they found that topics identified for parent events were not necessarily topics parents were interested in learning more about, such as the workshop offered on school-wide data. District and school leaders stated that they have hired additional bilingual staff to provide supports for families and further engage the school population. The school, district, and community partners have provided some translations in Spanish and Nepali for major school documents, such as the parent handbook, school community promise, and school newsletter, but the translation is inconsistent across other materials, which hinders some families in understanding and supporting their children.
- The school has neither developed nor implemented a plan to provide training to parents or to staff in order to build home-school partnerships. The school's continuation plan and quarterly reports indicate that the community and agency partners will provide professional learning for staff and families as a primary strategy to enhance family engagement, but currently this strategy has not been implemented. Teachers stated that they have had 185 hours of PD this year, but none of this was related to building or fostering partnerships with families. The school leader stated that although the school had plans to provide PD for staff in this area, this has not yet occurred. Additionally, parents and teachers interviewed could not identify any training that had been provided to families on understanding the curriculum or helping their child succeed academically.
- Although the staff have provide student data to parents and have piloted new strategies to communicate data with families, such as student-led parent conferencing and new internet tools, the staff has yet to ensure that all families fully understand the progress of their children and the steps they can take to help their children improve. Data is commonly collected by various community agencies and school partners; however, there is no system in place to ensure that the data is being integrated in a coherent way to ensure that it is accessible to all school staff, partners, and families. The school held three data sessions for parents to share how students across the school have performed in attendance and reading; however, parents indicated that these events did not meet the needs and interests of students and families. Parents indicated that data presentations provided an overview of the school, but did not offer information about their individual children or how parents could help their children improve. The school piloted student-led conferences with approximately 40

students and families, where students were trained to present their work and progress to their parents. Students and teachers expressed that this was a valuable experience, as it helped students identify areas of growth and areas in need of improvement, and the parents that attended indicated that this activity helped them understand how their children were progressing and what they still needed to accomplish. However, this activity was limited in scope, as most families and students were not involved. While parents receive progress reports and report cards regularly, the samples the review team looked at provided limited information about how students were doing. For example, the progress reports reviewed included grades, but no comments. In addition, the comments on the report cards reviewed were vague and generic, with statements such “does not work to ability” and “good participation in class.” Parents interviewed concurred that these documents do little to help them understand how to help their children improve. Some parents reported that the internet-based portal provides additional information about their child’s progress in some classes, but that data is not consistently updated.