



Purposeful Processing- Improving Outcomes for ELL's: One School's Journey Toward Equity.

EMMA LAZARUS HIGH SCHOOL FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE SCHOLARS

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ABSTRACT

Educational equity, for us, means all students receiving what they need to be successful. It is our argument that educational equity for ELL's, for a variety of reasons, is not consistently occurring in the majority of educational institutions. Our project addresses the value of creating a paradigm shift in instruction for ELL's that prioritizes developing students' cognitive processes as a means of addressing learning gaps, fostering independence in learning, and ultimately improving student outcomes and college preparedness.

INTRODUCTION

Our Cahn Fellows project is part of a multi-year initiative focused on improving outcomes for English Language Learners. This initiative is responsive to both internal and external data on the academic performance of English Language Learners, and considers corresponding situational factors identified as impacting ELL performance at Emma Lazarus High for English Language Scholars. The project is grounded in an asset-based model and targets the development of student skills specifically related to cognitive processing and higher order thinking as a means of addressing learning gaps, fostering independence in learning, and ultimately improving student outcomes and college preparedness.

Our Cahn project built on and deepened prior work the school had done in this area. The project also imbedded an adaptive leadership challenge specific to creating a paradigm shift in teacher pedagogy and systemic school structures. Entry points were through direct instruction, systemic structural and protocol modification, and curricular adaptations. Project supports and structures included: a pilot program instituting classroom structures and practices intended to increase student awareness of and engagement with cognitive processes; professional development focused on instructional equity and developing teacher capacity in skills-based instructional design; strengthening school wide protocols as foundations for student ownership of learning and engagement; and a beginning review of curriculum for engagement and rigor.

Our selection of a project for the Cahn Fellowship was directly aligned to who our student constituents are as individuals and learners. Emma Lazarus High School for English Language Scholars (ELHS) is a New York City Department of Education (NYC DoE) school whose

student population is completely comprised of second language students, making it relatively unique in school design and purpose. As a school comprised completely of current or former English Language Learners (ELLs), every decision and action is geared toward supporting ELL students in their path to graduation and preparation for secondary institutions. In addition to being an all ELL school, ELHS is also a transfer school. Transfer schools in the NYC DoE are schools whose purpose and role are to work with over-age and under-credited students and/or students who have not demonstrated success in their previous school. As a transfer school, our ELL students are older than most entering high school students, (entering between 16 to 21 years of age), who predominately begin with limited to no English, and frequently enter with significant educational gaps. Additionally, some of our students show limited literacy in their native languages. Nevertheless, these students also enter with a desire to be successful, a proven ability to overcome hardships and challenges, and inherent skill sets independent of any lack of English, math, or science skills. ELHS's declared mission statement is:

“To provide a safe, secure, and academically rigorous environment for second language students that prepares students for entry into post-secondary settings and the world of work. Graduating students will be bilingual and uniquely qualified to enter secondary institutions and the world of work”.

The following provides some additional history on ELHS as a context for understanding who we are and our subsequent problem of practice.

Emma Lazarus High School for English Language Scholars was opened ten years ago as part of Mayor Bloomberg's small school initiative. The school was designed and opened not only to be a high school for ELLs, but to be responsive to students who, entering the system as

older, non-English speakers, were often referred to high school equivalency programs due to age, demonstrated educational gaps, and lack of English language proficiency. Emma Lazarus was also designed to support older ELL students who may have been unsuccessful at other educational sites. Embedded in the creation of ELHS was a fundamental belief that older second language students could be successful given correctly aligned supports and quality, rigorous instruction.

A second and equally fundamental value was a belief in the critical role environment and inter-personal connections play in fostering student learning and achievement. A final belief intrinsic to the schools' initial design was an understanding that no single component would ensure student success, rather, student success would occur as a result of a holistic environment aligned to the needs of students individually, collectively, academically, and socio-emotionally. Our original design team believed that learning is holistic, and a key pillar of success was rooted in students' need to feel safe, connected, and supported. We believed in the power of creating a community of diverse learners that could come together to support each other, and we also believed in the inherent power environmental factors and relationships have in driving student achievement. These beliefs continue to be imbedded in the fabric of the school and are shared by most staff.

Emma Lazarus High School is located in New York City on the lower East side of Manhattan. The school is standardly considered to be part of the Chinatown neighborhood, which in recent years has shown a growing diversity of residents. The school shares an educational space with two other schools, a high school and a middle school. The school is well known and has a reputation associated with high standards and expectations for students. As a

transfer school, we are not participants in the standard high school application process for the NYC DoE, resulting in the majority of our entering students coming as referrals from current and former students and placement centers.

Currently, ELHS has a population of 313 students and the student body is diverse, representing 20 plus languages, dialects, and cultures. Current demographic data indicates the following language breakdown: Chinese (40%); Hispanic (31%); French/Haitian Creole (13%); Bengali (9%) and the balance a mix of Arabic, Russian, varied African dialects, Uzbek, Vietnamese, Thai, and Urdu. Emma Lazarus is also a Title One school with 87% of the students eligible for free lunch and 6% eligible for reduced lunch. Entering students are primarily students who are new to the country, but the school also accepts students who have experienced failure at other NYC high schools. The average age of students at entry is 17; however, the school takes students as old as 20 years of age.

In the 2018-2019 school year, of 133 new admits, 99 entered at level one English proficiency, indicating limited to no ability to speak, read, or write in English. ELHS has rolling open admissions with students entering throughout the school year. No student is excluded from admission based on lack of credits, low language or skill proficiency, or gaps in education. For the current year (2018-2019), 31% of entering students are students with interrupted formal education (SIFE), meaning they enter with gaps in formal education, skills, and knowledge. Identified gaps range from two years up to 10 years in traditional education. Other entering students include ELL students who transfer from NYC high schools and environments where they have not been successful.

The school utilizes an immersion model for instruction, focusing on English as the common language of interaction and instruction. This model incorporates standalone ESL classes that are sequenced based on language acquisition theory. The standalone classes use cross-curricular material to teach language skills. Since inception, a common standard in the planning of lessons has been the inclusion of three distinct learning objectives: content, language, and skill. These distinct learning objectives are relevant to our current problem of practice.

There are nineteen teachers on staff, two guidance counselors, and four social workers plus additional support staff. Total staff on site is thirty-two individuals. Most of our staff speak a second language with a clear intention of having staff that reflect our students.

Graduation rates for ELHS for the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years have been 67% and 74% respectively, exceeding the city and state's 29% graduation rates for ELL's. ELHS was cited as a Tier 1 school for the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years (which indicates performing in the top one percent of all schools city wide) and was identified as a Tier 2 school for the prior three years. In 2015, ELHS was named the number one school in the country for Title One students by Newsweek magazine. Additional data identifies ELHS as performing strongly in college readiness and college acceptances and among our peer schools.

In summary, this data is shared, not to laud ourselves, but rather to highlight the successes that ELL students and schools can have. What makes ELHS special (I believe) is that we have evidence of what can happen when ELL students are given a responsive, holistic environment that is challenging, supportive, and inclusive. The data indicates that equity, on a foundational level, means being responsive to who students are as individuals and creating

environments to meet their needs within challenging classes. The figures support our belief in the capacity of ELLs and the critical importance of recognizing that students, regardless of their entry language level, benefit from instruction that is challenging and engaging and that instruction incorporating high cognitive processes can occur independent of their lack of English language. We believe this is a critical component to effective instruction for ELLs and a key consideration in our Cahn project.

However, despite these successes, the reality exists that while ELHS is exceeding the graduation rates for ELL students state and city wide, between 25 – 35 percent of our students fail to graduate annually. Additionally, graduates, while meeting graduation requirements, still demonstrate gaps and weaknesses in their skill sets in comparison to non-ELL graduates. As students that enter high school late (as previously stated, between 16 to 20 years old) with little to no English, it is not surprising that their writing and vocabulary levels are not aligned to non-ELL graduates. Scores on the national SAT exam and internal writing samples indicate they are still entering college with skills that are weaker than their counterparts.

Furthermore, the reality exists that students entering as late-entry, non-English speakers have more academic demands placed on them than non-ELL students. Entering at ages of 17 plus means students have, at most, four years to internalize all the content non-ELL students have been exposed to in middle and elementary school without any of the prior contextual or cultural exposure imbedded within our educational system. Additionally, while learning content, ELL students are simultaneously learning English and navigating a new country and cultural norms.

Research indicates it takes five to seven years to learn a new language (Cummins, 2014). Our students standardly have between two to four years. Considering the length of time it takes to acquire language, along with the shorter amount of time our students have to complete all academic requirements, it is unrealistic to assume our students can exhibit the same mastery or depth of content-learning that non-ELL students demonstrate. It is also unrealistic to assume this lack of depth is not an impacting factor on exit examinations and college placement tests. Additionally, when engaging in item analysis and classroom-based observations, an area of weakness for our students is their ability to synthesize information and apply it in varied situations. Not surprisingly, lack of English is also a factor that impacts testing performance as well as engagement with processing skills.

Other considerations for our research project related to data specific to entering students. In the last two years, we have noticed a shift in our population in terms of ethnicity coupled with increasing numbers of late entry students with significant gaps in their education. In the 2018 school year approximately 25% of our entering students had no familiarity with the English alphabet and approximately 57% percent had no existing prior English vocabulary. Additional skill sets in content subjects evidenced limited to no familiarity with elementary grade level math functions.

While historically ELHS instructional planning documents have included consideration of cognitive processing skills, based on research, we believe a much heavier emphasis on the development of processing skills is a key ingredient in improving student capacity, and may be an entry point for creating a more equitable and level field when it comes to graduation and college and career readiness. We also theorize that a heavier focus on cognitive-based learning

provides increased opportunities for skill transference and cross-curricular learning that will consequently positively impact student outcomes. Additionally, focusing on skill development, coupled with the right instruction, allows students to maximize the development of high level thinking independent of language levels.

A weakness documented in the research emphasizes the error many schools make in teaching beginners with low level cognitive tasks because of the lack of language. Focusing on process-oriented instruction allows for learning that can transcend language and engage ELLs rigorously from entry, while providing compensatory structures for gaps in content and cultural information.

Problem of Practice

Based on these considerations, our Cahn project was specific to developing more explicit teaching and development of students' cognitive processing skills and student ownership of work as entry points to improving outcomes. We focused on how we could teach skills and worked to create a systemic structure for skill development that, while embedded in the instruction, involved explicitly taught and developed thinking skills. Simultaneously we began to develop more concrete and targeted practices to increase student awareness of lesson purposes and how these purposes connect to lesson materials and class time activities with intended outcomes of fostering independent learning and rapid language acquisition.

The purpose of this problem of practice is to strengthen outcomes for English Language Learners through deepening development of higher order thinking skills and increasing awareness of expected outcomes and ownership of learning.

The Cahn problem of practice was supported by inquiry work we engaged in as a staff, tethering our work to several books, journal articles, and other resources. We had been looking at research on adult learning (andragogy) and the development of cognitive thinking and transferable skills for students. We merged the work we were doing in these areas and began aligning the two areas of research to support the work we were doing on teacher planning and student ownership of work. Our primary anchor texts were: “How to Assess Higher-Order Thinking Skills in Your Classroom” by Susan M. Brookhart; “21st Century Skills: Rethinking How Students Learn” by James Bellanca and Ron Brandt; “Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students” by Zaretta Hammond; “Teaching with the Brain in Mind” by Eric Jensen; and “The Purposeful Classroom” by Nancy Fischer and Douglas Frey. These sources supported us in rolling out the initiative and were used in staff development as anchor texts. The following highlights some of the quotes specific to our project foci.

How to Assess Higher-Order Thinking Skills in Your Classroom by Susan M. Brookhart (2010, ASCD, Alexandria, VA)

- “Two of the most important educational goals are to promote retention and to promote transfer (which, when it occurs, indicates meaningful learning), retention requires that students remember what they learned, whereas transfer requires students to not only to remember but also to make sense of and be able to use what they have learned. (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001, p. 63).” (p.3)

- “Studies have shown that holding students accountable for higher-order thinking by using assignments and assessments that require intellectual work and critical thinking increases student motivation as well as achievement.” (p. 12)
- “When students receive instruction in higher order thinking skills, they perform better on a whole range of measures, from large-scale standardized tests to classroom tasks. Students who are regularly and routinely challenged to think, and whose teachers assess higher-order thinking in a manner that yields useful information for both students and teachers in their pursuit of improvement, will learn to think well.” (p. 142)

21st Century Skills: Rethinking How Students Learn by James Bellanca and Ron Brandt (2010, Solution Tree Press, Bloomington, IN)

- “An abundance of research establishes that changes in behavior *precede* the changes in the assumptions, beliefs, expectations, and habits that constitute the culture of an organization.” (loc. 1800 Kindle)
- “In short, if schools are to teach students 21st century skills, educators must collaboratively engage in the process to clarify what those skills are, the indicators they will monitor to ensure each student has acquired the skills, and the best strategies they can employ in helping students develop those skills.” (loc. 1829 Kindle)
- “One of the most critical elements of successful implementation of 21st century skills involve assessing whether or not students are acquiring those skills. Once, again, a growing body of research supports the power of assessment to improve, rather than merely report, student achievement.” (loc. 1841 Kindle)

Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students by Zaretta Hammond (2015, Corwin, A Sage Company, Thousand Oaks, CA)

- “For culturally and linguistically diverse students, their opportunities to develop habits of mind and cognitive capacities are limited or non-existent because of educational inequity. The result is their cognitive growth is stunted, leaving them dependent learners, unable to work to their full potential.” (p. 13, Kindle)
- “The reality is that they struggle not because of their race, language, or poverty, they struggle because we don’t offer them sufficient opportunities in the classroom to develop cognitive skills and habits of mind that would prepare them to take on more advanced academic tasks (Jackson, 2011; Boykin and Noguera, 2011.)” (p. 14, Kindle)

METHODS

The sequence of our work began in the summer of 2018 with myself, my ally, and the other assistant principal. We engaged in several meetings and Cahn professional development that helped us begin to identify our needs and theorize about our aligned problem of practice. One of our first discoveries was that we needed more voices in our process, so we invited four other staff members to join the team to support and add depth to the inquiry process.

During the fall of 2018 our meeting foci centered on engaging in a fishbone activity that was informed by student data and school anecdotes. We dug deeply into who our students were and identified weaknesses, looking for patterns that would provide entry points. Once we felt we had a solid understanding of our needs, we began to brainstorm about what entry points would provide the highest leverage points for student outcomes. As part of this process

we, as a team, spent a significant amount of time identifying what equity meant for our students and our school. Outcomes of these interactions and our research led us to a belief that development of our students' innate abilities to engage in critical thinking, coupled with development of student ownership of learning could serve as a compensatory tool for students. We also realized that to move forward with this meant a real shift in instructional methodology and implementation for our school, which propelled us to the realization that we needed to approach our project through varied entry points inclusive of whole school practices and scaffolded learning. At this time, we decided that the project would include the following elements:

1. Full staff professional development that began with developing a shared understanding of how our vision for equity translated into classroom practices.
2. A series of sessions that revolved around teachers developing an awareness of what critical thinking skills were being embedded in student tasks and cycling to a process of active planning specific to thinking skills.
3. School wide practices instituted around daily identification of a lesson purpose statement that was shared and processed with students specific to thinking skills and learning expectations.

As part of our implementation plan, tasks were delineated both individually and collectively.

Defined administrative tasks and actions included:

- Identifying necessary participants
- Developing structures that initiate the process in a non-threatening way
- Creating a spiraled learning process for all participants

- Developing a collective ownership of, and belief in, the value of skill development
- Providing on-going aligned professional development to support learning and developmental process
- Monitoring movement and adjust classroom practices based on outcomes
- Building capacity of the staff to plan for explicit teaching and identification of skills
- Work to create a school wide awareness of the value of the work and willingness to engage with the work

Teachers were supported in evaluating lessons in terms of levels of student engagement in critical thinking tasks and sequencing of activities to allow for increased student ownership of work. Intended teacher actions and goals included:

- Developing teacher consistency in defining skills and identifying them in their lessons (inclusive of fostering the same awareness in students)
- Developing teacher consistency in identification of student purpose statements
- Developing teacher incorporation of skills into the purpose statement
- Developing teacher consistency in processing of purpose statement with students
- Developing teacher understanding of the value of students engaging in these skills
- Developing teacher capacity to plan for skills in their lessons
- Developing teacher capacity to create project-based learning that provides authentic opportunities for students to engage in and evidence high level thinking skills.
- Teacher creation of pacing calendars that equally identify skills and content
- Developing teacher ability to assess for gaps in skills-based learning and respond adaptively individually and collectively

- Developing teacher ability to plan collectively for cross curricular content inclusion and identified transfer skills

While professional development in these areas began in the fall of 2018, the school team was simultaneously working on how to test our theories on improving ELL outcomes through deepening development of critical thinking skills. We decided there was a need for a targeted instructional focus on sequential skill development with the underlying long-term goals of bridging gaps in learning and accelerating learning of language and content through enhancing students' ability to understand the process of learning. Our team agreed that in addition to whole school processes, a pilot program would be initiated to delineate thinking skills through explicit teaching and processing of the skills within the framework of existing curriculums.

The pilot involved three teachers who all taught different ESL level classes. The intent was to implement skill development in a sequential model beginning with our L1 students through our L4 students, with each level corresponding to one semester of studying English. One of the immediate findings from this process was that we could not teach skills sequentially. Students exhibited varied capacities to understand and engage in cognitive processes, but the variation was across all English language levels regardless of acquisition level. After recognizing this, we agreed that all pilot teachers would engage in some standardized practices, but their methodology of engagement would be teacher determined based on their assessment of their individual students' progress. Pilot teachers collectively engaged in a set of standard processes intended to produce a theorized sequence of outcomes. The practices included:

- Creation of benchmark exams to support understanding of students' development of process skills and monitor them in their learning
 - A focus on the development of student awareness of terminology, definition, and purpose
 - Teacher initiates process lessons on skills: "What are skills / Why are they important/ When do we use them/How will they help me in my other classes (this is after pre-test)
 - Posting of anchor charts for consistency in exposure to skills/increased frequency of direct teaching specific to Depth of Knowledge (DoK) skills
 - Teacher identifies skills being used in each lesson
 - Teacher continues to identify skills but also asks students to identify what skill is being utilized
 - Teacher continues with practice one and two and begins to ask for evidence and how skill could be expanded
 - Teacher asks students weekly when they have used certain skills in other classes
 - Teacher begins asking students to look at their work products through the lens of what level of thinking they are engaging in
 - Development of targeted students' awareness and ability to identify skills and recognize cross-curricular transference.
 - Pre- and post-testing regarding student awareness of DOK skills
 - Pre- and post-testing specific to students' ability to articulate definitions of DOK skills
 - Pre- and post-testing specific to students' ability to evidence usage of DOK skills
1. Delineated sequence of expectations for students specific to awareness of transfer skills

Goals of pilot program:

- Students will understand what skills are and the value of skills in learning and everyday life
- Students will have site recognition of primary skills (terms) and be able to define what each skill is (rote definition in their own words)
- Students will be able to identify what skills they are engaging in/utilizing in each lesson
- Students will be able to speak to the process of skill and discuss how they are using these skills in other classes
- Student will internalize HOTS processing through exposure and engagement and use these skills as a tool to improve outcomes

RESULTS

Teachers engaged in the standard components of the pilot as indicated using pre-and post-tests each marking period, charting the outcomes with assessment results and anecdotal evidence. Outcomes indicated a definite pattern of increased awareness of skills language and a much faster than anticipated ability of students to identify the cognitive process that they were engaging in when prompted to relate classroom activities to skills language. This was particularly emphasized by the L1 teacher, a significant and encouraging outcome considering the limited English ability of students at this level. Charting in this Level 1 classroom also illustrated that a distinction in the rate of internalization of understanding varied from student to student. The L1 teacher pre- and post-testing was specific to each stage of the theorized student progression. Additional reported findings documented students' ability, with scaffolds and within the constraints of their language proficiency, to discuss their cognitive undertakings.

Higher level 1 students were observed explaining their thought process around critical thinking in the context of the tasks they were engaging in.

The Level 2 teacher, while engaging in explicit processing of verbiage and process did so with less frequency than the Level 1 teacher. This teacher reported movement in students' ability to define and identify the associated language but not a clearly identifiable internalization of process. However, the level 2 teacher grounded the teaching of critical thinking skills and awareness in the context of reading strategy development, a primary learning target for his class, and reported student movement specific to usage and identification of processing skills within the context of student utilization of reading strategies.

The Level 4 teacher, whose students would be defined as intermediate in language acquisition, evidenced the most movement towards internalized learning and transference of skills. Students were observed and recorded as using critical thinking vocabulary in routine classroom conversations and within a context that suggests ownership for the process. The majority of students in this classroom were able to identify the cognitive process they were engaging in during classroom work activities as well as actively approaching tasks with recommendations about what cognitive processes they would need to engage in to complete assigned tasks and projects. The teacher also identified a unique additional student behavior specific to their enjoyment in being able to actively speak about the process they were going through in order to complete higher level assignments. It was this teacher's belief that while students had engaged in these cognitive processes in prior classes, they had never had the clearly aligned language to consistently be active participants in the process. Her engagement

in explicit skill identification was done three to four days a week. Level 4 students appeared to make the most gains in the process of skill identification and transference.

In terms of implementation of the identified school wide teacher goals, we were able to stay on task in adhering to these target goals, however, as we moved forward, we recognized the magnitude of the task. Developing teacher capacity to engage in skill-based instruction and shifting the dynamics of the planning culture required thoughtful and extensive scaffolding of tasks. As leaders, we believed we understood the implications of implementing an adaptive change idea but as our work progressed, we more clearly understood implementing a change idea was a holistic and nuanced process. We also recognized that success would require having the patience to allow time for attention to a multitude of factors and the need to engage with the process in a step by step spiraled learning cycle. This realization resulted in our extending the time line to allow for on-going cycles of learning around each identified task as an accountability structure for ensuring learning, and for ensuring that consequent changes would become embedded into the fabric of the school. Extending the time frames has also allowed for teachers to work their way into the change through active engagement versus an administrative directive.

Results for our full staff project goals indicate that all teachers consistently post purpose statements identifying student daily learning goals. Soft date indicates that the majority of our staff (approximately 80%) routinely include explicitly identified skills in their purpose statements and approximately half of the teachers have been observed processing the purpose statement with students as an entry point for student ownership of the task and learning. Teachers all engaged in professional development geared around equity, with a targeted focus

on creating a common awareness and identification of classroom practices that support equity. Professional development on skill-based planning has resulted in an increased ability of teachers to evaluate projects and units for the level of cognitive challenge present for students. Teachers are also more actively focused on planning pacing calendars and daily lessons with clearly identified expectations for cognitive engagement, but this portion of the project is still in a development stage.

While some teachers are collaborating on cross curricular planning for skill transference, many teachers are still in the beginning stages of developing their capacity to assess for gaps in skills-based learning and respond collectively. Teachers have all received tools and professional development specific to this task.

In continuing to assess our results, the pilot program was the most impactful in illustrating student movement and outcomes. While these outcomes cannot be directly correlated to numeric gains in student performance, it should be noted that our instructional shifts instituted through the Cahn project were intended to provide foundational structures for improving outcomes. Development of students thinking skills and task ownership are the vehicles intended to link to and strengthen student capacity and ultimately improve outcomes.

Based on data from the pilot program we did see students evidence progression through the stages of comprehending, applying, synthesizing and in some instances creating through transference of thinking skills they were explicitly taught. As a team, observing this student growth has been invigorating and motivating. Given the level of awareness of, and engagement with thinking skills evidenced by our level 1 students, where will they be when they reach our ESL level 4 class? If actualized, these students theoretically could be operating

on a whole different level of engagement and performance, necessitating adaptations and upgrades to our curriculum and the complexity and rigor of our work at each level.

Additionally, and equally importantly is the potential it has to provide compensatory tools for students who enter with the previously identified gaps and act as tool for equity for our ELL students.

As educators, we have gleaned from our efforts thus far that the work around spiraled higher order skills are necessary to support struggling learners but also a means of potentially supporting all learners in college and career readiness. We are looking at the “big ideas” of skills being planned first before the rich content and language objectives. Once teachers design learning around skills first, the content and language can be layered to support ELL’s. The next goal of the teaching staff and administration is to look at how cross-curricular planning can support transference of the skills in order that students will recognize learning from one situation and apply it to another despite the language. We want to ensure we know the projects that students are engaging with and what skills that students will obtain in the curricula. Lastly, we need to continue to develop the teachers in the classroom while still looking at the accountability of our implementation, student ownership, and student outcomes.

REFLECTIONS

In reflecting on the Cahn Fellowship, the varied components of the program, and the work we have done as a school, there is little doubt of the potential it has to impact outcomes for our students, the impact it has had on developing us as a team, and its impact in fostering my growth as a leader. The process of the fellowship, while not necessarily engendering “Aha” moments, most definitely included numerous moments of increased awareness and learning.

These moments have been in response to technical needs surrounding our project and insights around the value of our process and engagement as a team. They also included insights on my leadership style, my ways of thinking and knowing specific to our staff, and an experiential awareness on how an adaptive leadership challenge necessitates leadership skills from a multitude of competencies if authentically implemented.

A final reflection is the recognition that it was being a participant in the Cahn program that served as the impetus for launching and sustaining our initiative on improving ELL outcomes. Independent of the framework, structure, and supports embedded in the Fellowship, we would not have embarked on this initiative. While as a school we have historically engaged in reflections and curricular and structural modifications in response to the reflections, the responses have often been singular in nature and often limited in evidenced outcomes I believe, because of the singularity of their nature. The Cahn Fellowship, through its expectations and focus gave us the push we needed to launch our initiative.

Imbedded in much of the learning from the Cahn seminars was an emphasis on inclusive leadership, and one of our early learnings in development of the project was the need for additional members if we wanted the task to be authentic. The addition of teachers and another assistant principal created a forum for us to be creative, engage in inquiry work, and use each other as resources and learning partners. Everyone brought different experiences and learning to the table which facilitated our ability to engage and implement our project at a deep and inclusive level.

I can honestly say that the project would not have been feasible or valuable independent of the collective brainstorming and actions of each member. In our meetings we

pushed each other's thinking, dug deeply into our students' needs, what equity looked like for them, and responded adaptively to challenges. This engagement, for me, was developmentally specific to my leadership skills and my understanding of how to build community through shared learning. The project also solidifies an understanding of the need for us, as a school, to provide opportunities for staff members school wide to engage through a lens of deep inquiry as a learning mechanism and culture building dynamic. Arguably, growth is a direct product of the process of learning, which is at the heart of our student project and also applicable to our adult cultures.

Moving forward we see this work as highly sustainable. This is attributable to the long term planning we have already engaged in and to the development of foundational practices already embedded in the school. As we developed our project, we recognized the importance of consistency in our goals and practices and linked the work we were doing with our Cahn project to the work being done with our Learning Partners team. We also worked collaboratively with our professional development team to align learning objectives and activities, all factors strengthening sustainability. Another component fostering sustainability, and an additional leadership reminder for me, is the level of "buy in" received when work is collaborative in nature, is perceived as valuable, and can be owned by individuals. It seems unarguable that a tenet we have deemed critical for student learning, (understanding and ownership of work) should be deemed any less valuable for teachers and adult learners and be consistently prioritized in my leadership behaviors.

The final and strongest argument for sustainability is the hope and enthusiasm this pilot program has generated. Educators and staff at our school are deeply dedicated to the

population we serve and are continually striving to be responsive to student needs. Initial results from our Cahn project has generated what we see as concrete shifts in student awareness of and engagement in critical thinking skills. The deepening of our work in this area is coinciding with research and other newly rolled out New York City Department of Education practices that identify skill development as defining elements in student success. We truly believe in the capacity of our students and believe our continued development of the Cahn initiative can, and will, be a valuable step in creating equity for our ELL students.

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In concluding this paper, I want to acknowledge the work that my Cahn team has put into the project over the last year. Throughout this year each member has engaged in numerous meetings, taken on additional tasks, researched, read and reviewed articles, planned projects, adjusted curriculums, and been continuously open to giving and receiving feedback. All this work and effort has been in addition to their regular responsibilities and directly responsive to their commitment to our students and the school. I want to acknowledge their time, energy and commitment. I thank you Joel, Michael, Zack, Lucy and Frid for your work and for being such incredible colleagues.

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