



January 2017

Dear Guest:

Welcome to East Side Community High School and thank you so much for joining us today. For most schools throughout New York State, the end of the semester is a time when student learning is being assessed through state-sponsored standardized tests. Our students take some of these exams. However, at East Side, we believe that learning cannot be sufficiently demonstrated within the confines of tests. This means that our students (and teachers) are challenged daily not only to prepare for tests, but also to read, write, think, share, explore, solve, create, collaborate, present, discuss, debate, question, defend, negotiate, compromise, and, most importantly, reflect upon themselves as learners and demonstrate a growth mindset. That is why twice a year we invite hundreds of visitors to assist us in our roundtable and portfolio process.

Before you proceed, I would like you to take a moment to appreciate what we are asking students and teachers to do. In many other schools in the country, students are taught to study hard for tests and share their work only with their teachers, and occasionally their parents or a peer. Too often teachers are taught to keep their doors closed and make sure that students do well on the tests and behave. Students and teachers are rarely asked to reflect upon their work and never, heaven forbid, expected to present it to other teachers, students they do not know, school leaders, family members, or (especially) 'strangers.' However our students are preparing to be productive citizens, participants and upstanders in a greater community, and future leaders. This means that they need to be held accountable for what they do in school and make sure they are prepared for the future. Our students' and our own work is never really done. And no matter how hard we have all worked, we are never quite satisfied. Nonetheless, we offer it to the public because it helps make our work better and it is to the public that our students and we are ultimately accountable.

Although there are countless benefits to the roundtable process in addition to those shared above, here are a few to keep in mind today:

Benefits for students:

- Prepares students for college, the workplace and 'the real world'
- Affirms to students that people in the greater community and world take an interest in what they think and learn
- Creates and models a sense of urgency
- Students have the opportunity to receive feedback from and learn from a variety of adults and their peers
- Promotes retention, analysis, and synthesis and asks students to make connections across units and even across the curriculum.
- Encourages growth mindset by emphasizing that learning is a process and that we grow our intelligence and improve our skills through effort

Benefits for teachers and staff:

- Allows teachers to learn from their colleagues' work and receive feedback from peers and people outside the school community
- Helps staff to reflect on curriculum, teaching and the learning students are doing
- Affords staff the opportunity to calibrate curriculum, standards and expectations across the grades and content areas
- Provides teachers with the option to assess their former students, seeing how they are growing, as well as meet their future students
- School leaders and coaches can get a strong sense of the teaching and learning that is happening across the school

Benefits for others:

- Provides families with the opportunity to see their children and children's classmates perform in the classroom, celebrate their work and reflect on their learning as well as better understand what their children are studying
- Allows colleagues from other schools to learn from and with our community
- Invites outside guests, community members, and friends to experience the work we are doing and engage intellectually with young people

We will be part proud and part humbled, but thanks to your participation, we will all have a little better understanding of where we stand and where we need to go. We thank you for volunteering your time to participate in this process and greatly appreciate your interest in our young people and our school. We also sincerely welcome and encourage your feedback on anything that you are a part of and observe today. You can email me at markf@eschs.org with feedback and joev@eschs.org with any questions about the process or to connect with any of our teachers.

Sincerely,

Mark Federman
Principal