

Park East High School

**Park East High School
230-234 East 105 Street
Manhattan
NY 10029**

Principal: Kevin McCarthy

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Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Park East High School is a neighborhood school serving the East Harlem and the Bronx communities. In the past five years it has made significant progress; attendance rates have increased and academic performance has improved dramatically. There are 350 students, the main ethnic group being Hispanic (55%) and the second largest group Black (43%). There is a slight gender imbalance toward females.

Approximately 80% of the student population comes from disadvantaged backgrounds and levels of achievement are low on entry. The school is housed in an old building and its facilities are cramped and dated not able to cope with the demands of modern curriculum and instructional delivery.

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Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- This is an improving school – staff, students, Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and parents recognize this.
- Progress has been made in English and mathematics, but in particular science and humanities.
- The school has made a conscious effort to develop the use of inquiry-based approaches to learning, and there are some excellent pockets of good practice, and other areas are in the developmental stage.
- The school's partnership with the Institute for Student Achievement (ISA) is a major strength in supporting the continued improvements in instruction being made at the school.
- The ISA coach has made a huge impact on the work with the principal and teachers in developing and promoting the ISA principles, which support and underpin the visions and values of the school.
- There are key teams around which the school is organized and they are empowered to support the principal.
- Professional development is a key feature; it is an important component of the whole school improvement process and in developing and projecting the school's vision and values.

What The School Needs To Improve

- There needs to be a clear process to developing assessment criteria being used and understood by all staff and students to promote ownership of learning.
- Strategies need to be identified and encouraged to support the use of the extended time period effectively; this will to support pupils and ensure they attend regularly to support continued progress.
- The school needs to continue to develop working with parents and other community based organizations to affect the vision and values of the principal and his staff.
- Continue to develop the 'smheart' girls project, and provide more opportunities for the boys as well.
- Develop more effective strategies for the use of data and baseline assessments to inform planning by teachers and target student intervention.
- Identify a clear process for ensuring assessments standards are rigorous across all subject areas in particular to promote ownership of learning by students.
- Find, or seek out, alternative funding support to continue to underpin the good practice already underway, or in place, and to encourage the new ideas and developments the principal has set to take this school forward.
- Continue to find ways to improve the facilities, learning environment and introduction of new technology to support further the learning and development of staff and students.

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Part 3: Main Findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school but with some areas still undeveloped.

The principal has only been in post for just under a year and his vision is to provide a supportive and inclusive environment focusing on team work and collaborative learning, which will enable the school to continue to grow and ensure students meet the highest standards possible.

It has however demonstrated that it has the capacity to change by the good progress made of late and the school and its stakeholders appreciate this.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria.

Quality Statement 1: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor and facilitate the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is mainly proficient with some areas still undeveloped.

All available data, including: Regents; scholarship data, data from the ISA partnership with Columbia University; school report card data; subject assessments; portfolio work and test results, support the good progress made by the school over the last two years.

This had been achieved using a variety of strategies. Teachers set their own classroom-based assessments and run mock Regents, which have proved effective in raising the Regents' examination results particularly in Math. The teachers' analyze the examination results by skills, which then help support future planning to meet student needs. Students as result are now also preparing for Math B examinations, something that could not have been contemplated until recently. Students also carry out self-assessments of their portfolio work in mathematics. Performance in science and humanities has seen marked increases. In humanities student portfolio work is assessed using rubrics.

The powerful partnership with the ISA also provides for teachers, assessment data from Columbia University and a rubric for assessing work in mathematics and English. This could be used more extensively and then the data used for establishing a baseline for all students.

ELL and SEN and students, arriving in school with levels one or two, are individually identified as in need of intervention, but the grade level coordinators monitor all students closely. Each grade team meets weekly, and although every child is reviewed on a regular basis, individuals causing concern are prioritized and case conferences are called. They also monitor attendance patterns. Attendance has improved, but is still not yet meeting the target level set for the school. The school has an electronic swipe card attendance system, but it has identified lateness as a bigger issue. Therefore it is likely that from next academic year all lesson times will have the same starting time in the

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morning and students may be required to attend extra classes before these. It was also felt that it would be easier to monitor attendance at these classes and have more impact than the current system which has proved to be ineffective.

Quality Statement 2: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient

Many students arrive with levels well below that which is expected on high school entry. The school has successfully trained staff in the techniques used for the Ramp-Up English program and this, as observed, is working well. Students are motivated and more confident and are exceeding their targets. Literacy and numeracy are key areas for development and these link well to the ISA program.

Collaborative team teaching is happening, and in humanities is particularly successful, and this is reflected in the improving results. The teachers have planning time for this. They have developed effective strategies; use a variety of resources; present challenging work, which is different, stimulating and accommodates the different learning styles needed for the students.

The advisory system is vertically grouped which promotes strong links between school, home and other organizations. The small sized groups also support increased dialogue between the students and their teachers, which ensure they are on target to reach their goals.

Inquiry-based learning is seen as a priority for students to make progress, but without being entirely exam based. It has been identified as key to developing teacher capacity to deliver effective instruction, and does not detract from improved examination results.

The use of portfolios is another area the school is developing to support formative continuous progress and it is intended to develop this across all subjects. The opportunity for drafting and reworking after supportive marking is an approach students preferred.

Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school has benefited greatly from the partnership with ISA and the services of their coach and mentor. She supports staff on a weekly basis and when observing lessons it was evident where her work with staff had made an impact. For example, in an English lesson students were using much more inquiry-based methods, the teacher had a variety of writing frames and used assessment rubrics.

Some areas of the curriculum are innovative, despite the cramped and inadequate conditions and lack of resources. Slam poetry was an elective being carried out by the mathematics teacher and the students were producing as an outcome a book and recording their poetry onto a CD. Students were highly motivated and some work heard

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and seen was of a good standard. The science department had organized a trip to museums for grade 9 students scheduled after an examination; minimizing disruption and ensuring a high turnout for examination.

In English a teacher was organizing buying reading resources for her classroom library to suit the needs of the student population and she was giving them books to read over the summer break after consulting with them what their preferences were.

The school is keen to develop other partnership with CBO's to actively promote the inquiry- base approach.

Spanish is being taught successfully to all students. The SmHEART girls group was formed earlier this year, their motto is Sisters Helping Each other Attain Respect and Triumph, it has to date made a huge impact on those students involved. Including setting higher personal targets, increased grades, improved attendance and modified behavior in and around the school. This has highlighted that there is a need for a gender specific group for the boys.

Other after school activities are also well attended, but underachieving students are less keen to remain behind for extra help and tutor support. The school is looking to reorganize its day to impact on improving attendance at after school classes for underachieving students; parents are keen to support this.

The principal has capitalized on the small classes and the unusually shaped classrooms by purchasing furniture, which will promote group work and inquiry-base learning.

The school library is an excellent, but under utilized resource. It needs to become a learning hub within the school, where students can work individually or in groups with access to all the resources and this will support greatly the personalized learning agenda for students.

However the school still needs to investigate more in the use of technology when delivering lessons and needs the capacity to allow the technology, which is already in place, but is under-used because of lack of training, maintenance and health and safety issues.

Quality Statement 4: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is mainly proficient with some undeveloped aspects.

The principal has only been in post for less than a year but in that time he has worked with his coach and key members of staff to ensure that the progress the school had made most recently continues. This is underpinned by inquiry-based instruction, collaboration, team teaching and portfolio based assessment.

At the heart of this is the continuing professional development of his relatively young and inexperienced team of staff. For example, at a cabinet meeting, the team leaders spent time planning for their annual three-day retreat, which is supported by the ISA. They were planning an innovative program which would clearly define the aims and vision of the

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school in the next academic year and ensure time for: planning; instructional focus; and developing formative assessment.

The assistant principal observes all new staff from this he identifies areas where professional development is needed and feeds this into the planning group who updates the calendar every six months. Peer observation is in place and seen as an important element in developing the curriculum, it could be now more focused to ensure good practice is shared systematically across all subject areas.

Quality Statement 5: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is mainly proficient with some areas still undeveloped.

Park East High School is a 'Title One' funded school. The very nature of this means the school has in place strategies to evaluate throughout the year, especially when data including Regents, scholarship reports and final exam results are readily available.

Cabinet meetings, retreats, professional development conferences, the ISA project are all mechanisms which the school uses at present to measure how it is doing and to make alterations weekly, each semester or annually.

The assistant principal works closely with the mathematics and special education department to monitor and review progress. In particular he has systems in place to support special needs and ELL teachers and learners.

The peer observations program is in place and well established, contributing feedback, supporting and evaluating student progress.

The school now needs to identify a clear process for ensuring assessments standards and processes are rigorous across all subject areas to support pupils. This should involve the students more, and make them more accountable for their own learning outcomes. The data gathered, along with the baseline assessments, should be used to: track student progress; inform planning by teachers; and target student intervention.

Being a small school means the college advisor and the grade level coordinators know their students well and are able to make informed decisions to support individuals and groups of students.

Other key observations

The principal is concerned that he is likely to be handicapped in the delivery of his curriculum in the next academic year, especially in the area of team teaching because of budgetary constraints; if some key staff leave there is no scope for employing any new staff.

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The facilities are old and cramped; they need upgrading and are not conducive to support effective teaching and learning for teachers and students alike.

The partnership and relationship with the ISA is almost at its end and this has been significant in the progress of the school over the last few years. Funding will be scaled down in terms of human and physical resources. The principal needs to actively seek out and develop new partnerships or perhaps the effectiveness of this partnership may allow the school to continue in another capacity where it could be a 'beacon' for other schools to model themselves on.

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Part 4: Evaluation Criteria Grade Summary

Quality Statement 1: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor and facilitate the student's progress over time.	o	✓	+
<p>1.1 The school uses available data (e.g., diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments, students work products, standards-based portfolios, attendance, descriptive review, security data, etc.) and generates its own to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of how well each student, classroom, grade level, and other important categories of students and the school are:</p> <p>(1) currently performing, and (2) progressing over time, on English language arts, mathematics, and other important academic subjects.</p> <p>Criteria for measuring student progress are "objective" when they are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • standards-based, • consistent across students, • capable of revealing progress or a lack of it over time and ways to close the gap between current and expected practice, <p>and when they allow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the performance of different students to be compared, and • learning activity to be broken down into component parts so strengths and weaknesses on each sub-activity may be identified. 		X	
<p>1.2 The school makes effective use of the data to assess the performance and progress of students by racial and ethnic groups, English language learners and special education students, and all other categories of interest to the school.</p> <p>{This criterion and the next are partially aspirational as of now. City and State Report Cards and Division of Accountability and Assessment reports provide only some of the necessary data. The NYC DOE will soon provide schools with fuller access to better data.}</p>		X	
<p>1.3 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, racial and ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.</p>	X		
Quality Statement 2: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	o	✓	+
<p>2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable, goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and it develops plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.</p>	X		
<p>2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as warranting attention.</p>		X	
<p>2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.</p>		X	
<p>2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. That information is central to setting reasonably challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.</p>		X	
<p>2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners</p>		X	

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Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	o	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with the school's high expectations and improvement plans and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals.		X	
3.2 Decisions about the use of teacher and student time are based on the organization of the day and week needed to inform teachers about each student's performance and next learning steps, set goals and plans for improved student learning, and implement and continuously improve plans for reaching stated goals.		X	
3.3 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.4 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.5 Teachers are accountable for student outcomes. The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.		X	
3.6 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.		X	
3.7 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.		X	
3.8 Instructional programs actively engage students.		X	
3.9 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.		X	

Quality Statement 4: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	0	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.	X		
4.2 Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer- evaluation are aligned and overlap.		X	
4.3 Leaders, faculty, and staff share the same goals and frequently evaluate themselves, their interventions and each other's plans and interventions, including, when possible, by comparing outcomes across classrooms and schools. The school monitors its performance and tackles weaknesses. Even in areas where the school is successful, leadership is not complacent, but aims to improve further. The goal in all cases is to improve student and school performance and progress.		X	
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results and revision of plans takes place in teams.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.		X	
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear and are generally followed.		X	

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Quality Statement 5: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.	o	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is reaching stated goals.	X		
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by interim assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.		X	
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive each successive phase of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve students' academic outcomes.	X		