

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Central Park East I

Elementary 497

1573 MADISON AVENUE
MANHATTAN NY, 10029

Principal: Lindley Uehling

Dates of review: May 9 10, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Mariano Guzmán
Associate Reviewer: Sara Felíz

Part 1: The school

Information about the school

Central Park East I is an elementary school with 208 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 29% Black, 33% Hispanic, 26% White, and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 94.6%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is Proficient.

What the school does well

- The school has created a culture that values the social and emotional needs of the entire school community with targeted supports that promote personal and academic success. (1.4)
 - The school's mission to provide an education that fosters the intellectual, social, creative, and physical growth of each student in a safe and nurturing environment is evidenced by its striving to empower each student to achieve his or her greatest potential and inspire them to use that potential for the benefit of others and the world. This 'Theory of Action' frames all conversations about learners and focuses students' strengths with problem solving to address their challenges. Thus, the goal is to create a more tolerant, inclusive, and positive learning environment where all can succeed. Central to this work is the school's ongoing relationship with the Perceptual Development Institute, an approach to diagnosing and remedying learning struggles by remediating problems in the multi-sensory paths of perception. This approach improves many aspects of student performance by addressing perceptual problems that would otherwise be missed as casual factors in delayed learning. Worth noting, is the role of parents as integral members of the school community, including their full engagement in all decisions affecting the school as a whole and their children in particular. This high level of parent participation is maintained despite the school drawing from many communities throughout the City due to its un-zoned nature. In interviews with parents, it was evident that a common culture and philosophy creates a community oneness that affirms the school's goals. It is not uncommon for example to find generations of families that have traveled a distance to attend the school over its long history. Its value system and holistic approach to individualized instruction was a primary reason that many parents explained led to their continued selection of the school and their daily involvement. By drawing from throughout the City, the school has created a richly diverse body of learners and families embodying a strong community of respectful learners with every student well known to every adult in the building. Students are guided in their exploration of the broader world through direct and meaningful experiences while reinforcing their responsibilities and connections to it. As evidence of their engagement, parents and teachers response rate to the NYC School Survey regarding safety, order and discipline, and high priority on quality of teaching were all above 90%, significantly higher than both Citywide and district averages.
- The school designs its curricula to be engaging and rigorous incorporating State standards and City-expectations, addressing individual interests, strengths, and needs of the various learners in the school. (1.1)
 - School leadership and staff integrate the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) with the curricula aligned to State standards, providing students with learning experiences that emphasize a balance between content, the thinking skills necessary for success in the 21st century, and the literacy and math skills that will support them as lifelong learners. Teachers have developed the Ten Stages of Reading, a rubric that guides individualized instruction throughout the grades with a major emphasis on early childhood education and reading readiness. This ongoing critical review of student work guides the school's curricular approach to project-based instruction and multi-age classroom groups differentiated for each learner. This work is evident in all classrooms as well as clubs formed by individual teachers, such as the inquiry-based philosophy club at the upper grades. Students are constantly engaged in inter-disciplinary and subject-focused activities with student work organized around problem solving, projects and big questions that require thinking deeply about significant issues. For example, a first/second grade cross-disciplinary City Study included building a city employing the broad areas of architecture and environment. With the teacher as a guide and resource, students were engaged in collaborative research, problem solving, and production. Students are exposed to learn complex vocabulary, and engage in math

and scientific thinking and problem solving through these project-based experiences that serve as a backbone of curricula. The school's differentiated approach and individualized instruction has been essential to its well-regarded work with students with special needs. As a result, the school has an "A" in performance with a Citywide 70% percentile rank and a district-wide 86% percentile rank in academic success for self-contained/Integrated Co-Teaching/Special Education Teacher Support Services (ICT/SETSS) students.

- The school's set of beliefs about how students learn best informs teacher pedagogy which results in student growth and meaningful work products. (1.2)
 - Lessons that are planned with grade level expectations in mind provide opportunities for all students to learn engaging content, and provide opportunities for them to engage with tasks and resources that are developmentally appropriate. Individual student growth is tracked and shapes lessons that engage students across grades in advanced, on level, and intervention groups, thus providing ample scaffolds to improve learning. Throughout classrooms there is evidence of inquiry learning and engaging projects. For example, in a kindergarten/first grade class, by using the observation technique students studied how worms breathe through moisture on their skin. They reviewed the moisture holding capacity of paper, lettuce, and soil and their work products included writing their noticings as well as their wonderings. Teachers provide necessary prompts during questioning to ensure students are using academic vocabulary relevant to the lesson. Student writing as a measure of meaningful student work products is a major focus of school teams for the last several years and has resulted in the development of a writing continuum with a strong emphasis on interpreting pre-coding skills. As such, teachers currently observe, note, and assess each student's writing skills on a continuous basis to inform and adjust curriculum. As teams, teachers collaboratively examine and track student specific data that emerges from the Writing Continuum. As a result, teachers report that they are better able to differentiate their lesson planning to meet the individual needs of all students and more specifically students with special needs including English language learners. Consequently, students and parents across grades report that work assignments are meaningful and allow all students to be engaged.
- The school effectively uses a range of assessment data that guides student grouping decisions and informs planning, resulting in a clear understanding of the performance of learners. (2.2)
 - All teachers regularly maintain "observation notes", delineating the academic and behavioral progress of students across their subject areas and project work. The "Stages of Reading" and "Writing Continuum Initiative" comprise the pivotal, rubric-driven assessment structures which contribute intricately to the periodic "Descriptive Reviews" which laser in on how and why students thrive in some areas while they may struggle in other aspects of their learning. All documentation is archived in formal portfolios which travel with students throughout their elementary school years. As a result of this layered, narrative approach to assessing and analyzing student progress, a two-year looping system is greatly successful across grades since the plethora of documentation enables teachers to view and know each student deeply. More importantly, however, is the notion that teachers seize this wealth of documentation to reflect on and modify the rigor embedded in projects, the value of instructional resources used, and their instructional moves with students. Consequently, parents and students alike greatly appreciate the ongoing, intimate academic discussions which stem from the narratives, and students feel continually motivated to forge ahead with learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase the frequency of teacher feedback opportunities so that pedagogy is regularly discussed between administration and teachers, resulting in enhanced professional development plans which further adult learning across the school. (4.1)
 - The school has voted to utilize the planning, questioning, and problem solving competencies of the Danielson Framework to inform ongoing feedback to and among teachers regarding the quality of pedagogy. However, since there is only one administrator on staff, the principal assumes the role of both compliance manager and instructional leader. The principal does not informally visit classrooms on a frequent basis, and therefore, the formal observation report has become the primary vehicle by which teachers are informed periodically of their teaching strengths and next steps. As a result, all teachers do not benefit from ongoing communication with the principal regarding their evolving strengths and areas for improvement, and opportunities are missed to capitalize on the knowledge and skills of the more adept teachers to develop and lead professional development opportunities for their peers.
- Formalize structures which capture the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction to ensure maximum utility in the school's vertical planning of its purposeful instructional practices across the school community. (5.1)
 - At this time, the principal and the school's advisory team have discussed the need for increased accountability in order to promote improved student progress across subject areas. However, the principal's active involvement in evaluating and revising the various facets of school-level decisions on curriculum, pedagogy and adult learning has been limited as she continues to define her role in the school as its sole administrator. Teachers, nonetheless, are sub-divided into three distinct teams, each charged with continually evaluating the strengths and struggles of the students they service. During weekly meetings, these teacher teams assemble to probe student work, make connections to the respective student behavior in class and share ideas on meaningful instructional next steps and resources. Although the principal attends these meetings regularly and "makes statements of opinion" during the sessions, the school leader has not yet led the assorted teams in making connections and surfacing trends in data across all grades so that curriculum resources and personnel are further developed or revised in real time. As a result, a comprehensive scope of data is solely utilized consistently by the upper grades, and so, the instructional planning is better tailored to address both student need and interest, leading to students in grades 3 through 5 owning a stronger, more tangible understanding of their academic growth than younger students in the school.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: School name: Central Park East	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score			X	
Instructional Core				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, including the arts, physical and health education, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			X	
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to curricula, engaging and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?			X	
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?			X	
School Culture				
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?			X	
Systems for Improvement				
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet students' learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			X	
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?			X	
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?		X		
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			X	
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?		X		
Quality Review Scoring Key				
UD Underdeveloped	D Developing	P Proficient	WD Well Developed	