Quality Review Report

2013-2014

Parkside Preparatory Academy

Middle School 002

655 Parkside Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11226

Principal: Adrienne Spencer

Dates of review: February 4 - 5, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Buffie Simmons

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Parkside Preparatory Academy is a middle school with 479 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 84% Black, 10% Hispanic, 1% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 94%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school ensures curricular alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) to provide access to cognitively challenging learning experiences for all students. (1.1)
    - Curriculum maps include essential and guiding questions, assessments, comprehension skills, and writing goals and are aligned to the CCLS and Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE). For example, English language arts curricula embed argumentative essay writing that requires students to support claims and cite textual evidence. Similarly, social studies unit plans integrate analysis of primary source documents such as Patrick Henry's speech and the Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of taking up Arms. Additionally, a seventh grade math performance task requires students to compute unit rates - associated with ratios of quantities measured in different units. Furthermore, math curricula learning tasks require students to use the context of math word problems to recall the meaning and value of a ratio, equivalent ratios, rate and unit rate to further reflect the rigor of the CCLS. In English language arts and social studies, teachers developed a humanities curriculum aligned to the CCLS including the integration of art projects, thus exposing students to diverse content knowledge. School leaders and teachers discuss student work and outcomes and adjust units of study and tasks to ensure students' needs are met. For example, modifications to curricula for English language learners (ELLs) and special education students include modeling, vocabulary development strategies, graphic organizers, glossaries, sentence starters, pre-review of notes for lessons, and journals. In addition, unit maps also indicate other resources that teachers are able to incorporate in lesson plans, thus aligning the school's curricula to the CCLS and ensuring that all students are cognitively engaged.

- The school administration fosters a collaborative culture characterized by a variety of structures that support students' academic, social, and emotional growth. (1.4)
    - The school community's ethos for education is typified by a common belief that, "All students can learn if given the right resources and encouragement." As part of the school's culture, students are involved in reciting the morning message, school pledge, student vision pledge, expectations of the school's uniform, and the Chancellor's Regulations regarding cellular phones, thus setting the tone for the school day. Furthermore, students stated that they feel safe and comfortable meeting with teachers for guidance and academic support. Students equally voiced that teachers help them understand the lesson by ensuring that concepts are explained and mastered. Moreover, students shared that they value teachers' supportive attitudes in afterschool academic programs and unofficial support offerings by individual subject teachers, the dean, and school safety agents. One student stated that her goal was to attend an audition for an arts school and as such, she was developing a portfolio with support from the school. The student also shared how

teachers supported her in overcoming academic struggles and challenges, and described the difference between this school and her former school where she felt stifled. Similarly, parents spoke of the great advances made by the school in keeping them informed, empowering their children with voice and purpose, and providing all students with the conviction to succeed. The parent coordinator is well valued as the hub of information and support for parents regarding students' discipline, academic concerns, school meetings, and general school information. Parents also stated how the school engages them in being partners in their children's education. For instance, the school uses Engrade and Edmodo to give parents immediate access to students' grades, homework, teachers' comments, and daily attendance via an online system. In addition, clear systems for attendance procedures are personalized to ensure that outreach by the school attendance personnel, including home visits, are conducted as needed, thus guaranteeing that a high average of students attend school on a daily basis. Moreover, in the student group interview, students also stated that everyone in the school works very hard in supporting them to become more responsible for their own learning behaviors, thus leading to students' personal and academic growth.

- School administrators use the observation process, analysis of student work, and focused feedback to communicate clear expectations that support teacher development and practice. (4.1)
    - The school administration uses an effective process of refining teacher effectiveness based on evidence gathering, ongoing feedback, and articulated clear instructional expectations. For instance, the classroom observations reviewed show how the administration uses the Danielson Framework for Teaching to give feedback and specify areas of strengths and areas for improvement. In addition students' interim assessment data is also included in the written and verbal feedback teachers receive from the supervisors. For example, a written observation report stated how the teacher needed to include student self-reflection and increase expectations for writing by using a more rigorous rubric aligned to the CCLS. Similarly, written feedback to another teacher identified effective use of multiple texts, to provide differentiated assignments. In the written observation report, the administration links earlier observation reports and informal feedback sessions, provide specific suggestions with clear next steps such as meeting with the administration to discuss specific teaching strategies, and/or scheduling a one-on-one meeting with coaches from the school's support network. Teachers also receive recommendations and support in aligning lesson plans to the CCLS, strategies for increasing student engagement, and effective questioning techniques. Through collaboration with peers as well as school based workshops and Network supports teachers are provided ongoing professional development aligned to the Danielson Framework to further strengthen pedagogical practice. During the teacher team meeting, teachers stated that supervisory feedback has helped them to improve their instructional practice, thus fostering teachers' professional development and growth.

- Teacher teams collaborate in supporting the school's goals, implementation of the CCLS, and analysis of student data to ensure progress toward goals and student achievement. (4.2)

    - Teacher teams use specific protocols to analyze student performance data, school wide data, and CCLS alignment, thus identifying effective instructional strategies and students' academic needs. For example, the interdisciplinary literacy and social studies teams use the "Student Work Analysis Protocol" to analyze student work samples, gather students' background information, and plan academic intervention for individual and groups of students. Furthermore, team members have opportunities to ask clarifying questions, independently review student work to identify student's strengths and struggles, and provide suggestions to the presenting teacher for instructional next steps. In addition, teacher teams dedicate time to align the curricula to the CCLS, and make adjustments to performance tasks to further advance the school's instructional goals. For example, in a teacher team meeting, teachers reviewed data and asked "what was the impact of the strategy implemented to target standard S1.1F, which was identified as a common challenge during the midterm data analysis?" Teachers further discussed how students struggled with explaining daily, monthly, and seasonal changes on the Earth. Teachers highlighted that the challenge was specific to working with the latitude/longitude coordinate system and explaining how the system of time is based on celestial observations. Teachers proceeded by having discussions about the implications for their classroom practices, and agreed to implement entry tickets as a link to the new lesson, thus activating students' prior knowledge. One teacher expressed that, "The work of this team makes us better teachers and helps us to improve our practice." In addition, teachers shared how they are empowered to perform inter-visitations, irrespective of years of experience, for further support their colleagues. As a result, the school's structure in fostering high levels of collaboration and supports leads to effective teacher teams, thus cultivating professional development to increase teachers' growth and students' academic achievement across the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen teaching practices to ensure that teachers consistently provide multiple entry points and engage students in high levels of thinking to increase students' achievement. (1.2)

    - Across classrooms, teachers collectively and individually engage in planning to differentiate teaching strategies and routines, as evidenced in unit plans. However, lesson delivery does not consistently meet the varied needs of students, thus resulting in uneven levels of engaging students in thinking and participation. For example, in a classroom visited, students viewed a short biography, and after watching the clip, students engaged in a warm-up activity requiring students to use evidence from the clip to answer, "Why is Mendel commonly known as the father of genetics?" The teacher then gave students the content vocabulary and instructed them to work in their groups. The lesson also included warm-up routines with questions of varied difficulty levels aiming to increase engagement and address varied students' needs. Similarly, in

a classroom for high proficient students, the teacher used questioning and primary documents to engage students in thinking and discussions. However, common instructional practice reflected in other classrooms demonstrates how teachers use surface level questions, non-authentic instructional materials, and learning activities that lack student engagement and meaningful discussion. As a result of inconsistent effective instructional practice across the school, not all students are given opportunities to engage in high levels of thinking and challenging learning. Although lessons and units require a higher level of thinking, instructional delivery is inconsistent, thus limiting opportunities for all students to engage in rigorous learning and academic achievement.

- Improve school wide assessment practices and use of on-going checks for understanding so that adjustments to instruction effectively meet all students' learning needs. (2.2)

    - Department teams create and use common assessments, such as baseline, interim assessments, and formative assessments to evaluate students' performance from unit assessment. However, although teachers, individually and in teams, dedicate time analyzing summative, periodic, and classroom level student data to support students' academic needs, they are not able to consistently identify the specific needs of student sub-groups across grades and content. Consequently, this limits teachers' ability to fully target and address the needs of all students, and effectively adjust instruction to accelerate student learning. Moreover, the use of rubrics and checklists for peer and self-assessments during lessons, as well as other ongoing comprehension checks by teachers, are inconsistently used across classrooms. In addition, although teachers use common rubrics and exit slips to assess students' learning, checks for understanding are inconsistent across classrooms, hence hindering student learning and progress. Furthermore, some classrooms show evidence of intermediate checks in the form of questions posed to specific students to gauge understanding, while other classrooms only involve surface level questions hindering teachers' ability to make immediate or timely adjustments to the lessons, to address students' learning needs.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name:	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score			X	

Instructional Core

To what extent does the school regularly…	UD	D	P	WD
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards?			X	
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the 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

To what extent does the school …	UD	D	P	WD
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports 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 those expectations?			X	

Systems for Improvement

To what extent does the school …	UD	D	P	WD
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student 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 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection?			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