

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Park Place Community Middle School

13K266

**62 Park Place
Brooklyn
NY 11217**

Principal: Glenda Esperance

Dates of review: October 28-29, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Barbara Freeman

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Park Place Community is a middle school with 156 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 65% Black, 32% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 22% special education students. Boys account for 59% of the students enrolled and girls account for 41%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 91%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders develop and refine curricula aligned to key standards, with tasks and units of study to ensure that all students have access to rigorous and demanding curricula. (1.1)
 - In collaboration, faculty and school leaders selected Common Core aligned materials recommended by the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) to support literacy and mathematics instruction. Major and minor subject area teachers align units and tasks from Engage NY, previously adjusted and refined units of study, and America Read's content area literature, to strengthen the coherence of curricula from grade to grade and provide additional supports for all students, as they strengthen students' academic and personal behaviors with demanding units of study and tasks. This approach allows students to benefit from instruction grounded in rigorous curricula.
 - Weekly planning meetings by content give teachers and school leaders the opportunity to "unpack" curriculum in order to ascertain student progress throughout the unit and surface adjustments in supports necessary for all students to be successful. Pre-assessments inform teachers of their starting point within units of study, while data from formative assessments results and student work determine adjustments needed throughout the unit, and inform summative assessments to be completed at the end of all units. Through this structure, teachers have become strategic in creating their student groups, identifying instructional support structures, and refining unit maps and tasks, resulting in students having access to engaging curricula.
- The principal has deliberately aligned organizational decisions concerning resources and the use of time, in order to support school goals that meet students' needs. (1.3)
 - The principal makes deliberate decisions about the school's budget and the use of teacher and student time that reflects the school's core values and instructional focus. In order to deepen their work with the instructional shifts by providing students with more opportunities to engage with informational text, the school has purchased libraries for all humanities classes. The school participates in the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) which provides a trained coach that supports teachers two times per week, in professional development related to the Danielson framework. Chess in the Schools and additional art materials have enhanced extracurricular programming for students. To support at risk students not mandated for summer school, the school offered a tutorial program for four weeks. Administrators also adjusted teacher schedules and the school's bell schedule, to increase the number of ELA periods, without hiring additional personnel, and implemented strategic student-teacher matches to groups, to accelerate student progress. As a result, the quality of student work has improved.

- The principal has structured team meetings that focus on instructional goals and student progress. Teachers' schedules reflect weekly inquiry team-based work and monthly grade conferences. Through a School-based Option (SBO) teachers have elected to include an additional work period focused on looking at student work. Teachers came in for one week before school began in September, to review units of study to ensure that the units were rigorous and challenging for students and aligned to new summative data received during the summer. As a result, teachers are highly focused on their professionalism and responsibilities to strengthen their practice as well as make adjustments to plans, so that academic tasks remain challenging as well as engaging to all students.
- School leaders maintain a culture of trust, providing academic and behavioral supports for students and professional development opportunities for staff, to ensure that all learners in the community have opportunities for growth. (1.4)
 - In order to continue building the culture of teaching and learning, during the summer months the school focused on creating an environment which would be more respectful than in the past, for students and staff. School emblems and positive quotes line the halls and new office furniture creates a professional space. The school also created a bulletin board focused on student activities, successes, and information. Formal structures, including student government, provide students with a voice in decision-making at the school. Students also feel comfortable having informal conversations with teachers and school leaders, through surveys, notes and the principal's mailbox. Teachers are participating in a book study focused on what middle school teachers should know about their students. There are also plans for professional development on dealing with conflict and stressing academic and personal behaviors. These activities continue to strengthen the school's culture, enabling staff and students to grow and develop in a trusting and positive environment.
 - The school is organized well to address students' needs. There are advisory periods conducted by classroom teachers and administrators and, "Everybody has someone to talk to", stated one of the students. The school's guidance counselor and newly acquired social worker follow up on concerns through interactions with students and families. Parents said, "The school is on top of everything, from attendance to behavior". They also feel school leaders know their children and work collaboratively to ensure they are informed about their children's needs and how those needs will be addressed. The school has developed a set of non-negotiable rules that are posted in each classroom and discussed with all students. This has resulted in effectiveness in addressing students' needs, as evidenced by a dramatic reduction in the number of superintendent suspensions and an increase in student work from the number of units of study completed.
- School leaders consistently use formal and informal observations to provide actionable feedback, using the Danielson Framework to raise instructional practices school wide, thus promoting teacher growth. (4.1)
 - The school supports teacher growth with alignment between initial planning conferences (IPCs), school goals, and instructional foci. This year's focus is on raising the level of student discussion and engagement,

using student work from teacher created assessments to provide information on student progress. School leaders are committed to observing instruction in three classrooms per day and providing teachers, including new teachers, with verbal feedback within 24 hours. Follow-up visits occur within a week to see if recommendations are implemented. The school is focused on domains two and three of the Danielson rubric, which focuses on classroom environment and instruction as leverage points that the school believes will yield high levels of student progress. Feedback in these areas is based on the observation itself and on class data, in order to provide supports that lead to teachers reflecting on their own practice. These cycles of observation have resulted in effective feedback to teachers, including next steps, leading to ongoing improvement in instructional practices across the school, as measured by follow up observations.

- The school participated in the Teacher Effectiveness Pilot (TEP) and now engages with the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) to deepen teachers' work around the Danielson framework. The fund provides a peer instructional coach and designates demonstration teachers (DT's) in order to align the Danielson Framework's theory with teachers' instructional practices to strengthen teacher capacity. Teachers receive feedback around classroom management, timing and pace of lessons, and consistently implement prior feedback and recommendations. Administrators have also given feedback on preparation and planning focused on instructional groups and lesson unit structures. The principal states that during the follow-up phase of the observation process, she has seen changes occur within a week, and through reflective conversations with teachers, there is now a deep appreciation of the teachers' thought processes in planning instruction. This enables teachers to receive targeted supports and strengthens school leaders' ability to offer next steps, as they view trends of teacher practices school-wide.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen the alignment of teacher practices with the school's beliefs on how students learn best, enabling all learners to engage in complex tasks that continues to elevate their thinking and enrich their work products. (1.2)
 - The school's motto is "all children can learn if given the opportunity to do so." Thus the school is committed to providing inclusive classroom environments, with differentiated scaffolds within lessons to support the needs of all learners. Moving towards a data driven instructional system, teachers adjust their instructional practices based on student work samples and classroom data, to address student needs. Flexible grouping based on ability/interest is evident in classrooms, along with accountable talk stems to further student discussions during the practice phase of lessons. However, some lessons do not show deep application of the instructional shifts, resulting in instruction that is not fully aligned to the school's curricula and instructional practices.
 - Across classrooms it was evident that administrators have stressed specific instructional practices, such as establishing a culture for learning, managing classroom procedures, and using questioning and discussion techniques. Student groups reflected various ability levels to support

English language learners and students with disabilities, thus providing them with access to rigorous curricula. For example, in a grade 8 math class student groupings enabled mainstreamed students to participate in justifying their answers to a multi-step algebra problem. However the use of extensions and supports for high achieving students was limited, hindering consistent engagement of all students in highly challenging tasks and minimizing opportunities to build higher order thinking skills for all learners.

- Engage all staff in inquiry based teamwork that deepens the focus on achieving school goals and building teacher effectiveness, by systematically analyzing data to accelerate improvements in student learning. (4.2)
 - All teachers are engaged in inquiry work. The teams focus on norming protocols as they view student work and examine common assessment data. Teams meet weekly by content and monthly by grade, to ensure coherence as they implement new curricula materials. Teachers are responsible for making adjustments to unit plans based on student's work in progress throughout the lessons. Teachers rely on this time to discuss instructional practices needed to support the new curriculum materials and during an observed meeting teachers shared strategies to support struggling student groups. However, collaborations are more focused on protocols in meeting structures than on inquiry activities linked to full implementation of CCLS schoolwide, thus lessening their impact on strengthening teachers' capacity to increase student achievement.
 - School leaders are part of the school's inquiry work in order to ensure that data and work samples are included in the discussions and adaptations to unit lessons. Leaders also monitor student discussion and the quality of student work as indicators of effective adjustments to department/teacher plans. They also provide professional development to the staff as they move the school towards a data driven model that increases the effectiveness of instructional adjustments. However, teacher teamwork does not yet reflect in-depth analyses of classroom practices, student work and data for, thus limiting the school's ability to promote rapid improvement in teaching practices and promote students' progress in attaining learning goals across departments and grades.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Park Place Community	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 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							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	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							
<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 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