



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

**Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning**

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**Park Place Community Middle School**

**Middle School K266**

**62 Park Place  
Brooklyn  
NY 11217**

**Principal: Glenda Esperance**

**Date of review: April 30, 2015**

**Lead Reviewer: Lucia Perez-Medina**

## The School Context

Park Place Community is a middle school with 126 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 66% Black, 31% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 0% English language learners and 28% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 90.0%.

## School Quality Criteria

| <b>Instructional Core</b>  |                            |                   |
|--|----------------------------|-------------------|
| <i>To what extent does the school...</i>   | <b>Area of:</b>            | <b>Rating:</b>    |
| 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   | <b>Additional Findings</b> | <b>Proficient</b> |
| 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 | <b>Focus</b>               | <b>Developing</b> |
| 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   | <b>Additional Findings</b> | <b>Proficient</b> |
| <b>School Culture</b>  |                            |                   |
| <i>To what extent does the school...</i>   | <b>Area of:</b>            | <b>Rating:</b>    |
| 3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations  | <b>Celebration</b>         | <b>Proficient</b> |
| <b>Systems for Improvement</b>   |                            |                   |
| <i>To what extent does the school...</i>   | <b>Area of:</b>            | <b>Rating:</b>    |
| 4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning   | <b>Additional Findings</b> | <b>Proficient</b> |

## Area of Celebration

|                           |                              |                |                   |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| <b>Quality Indicator:</b> | <b>3.4 High Expectations</b> | <b>Rating:</b> | <b>Proficient</b> |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|

### Findings

The school conveys high expectations that promote parental involvement and support learning so that staff, students and families work together toward achieving school goals.

### Impact

School leaders and teachers share accountability for a culture of high expectations for learning. Parents support and understand student progress toward those expectations.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school communicates with parents about learning expectations through family letters, notices, ongoing parent conferences, *Jupiter Grades*, and progress reports. Workshops and partnerships provided to families include family literacy, math and science nights. Additionally, parents participate in academic and personal learning experiences by attending honor roll ceremonies and special events.
- During the parent meeting, some parents praised the school for high expectations and added that they are kept abreast of their children's progress toward those expectations, via a messaging system, phone calls and emails from most teachers, one-to-one conferences during Open School Week and the weekly parent outreach period. Five parents expressed that they can keep track of their children's performance regularly by logging into *Jupiter Grades*.
- The principal communicates with the staff via memos informing them of expectations, professional learning opportunities, recognitions, and other announcements. In addition, various memoranda, data collection and reporting sheets, and templates for analyzing student work, further specify the school's high expectations. For example, an instructional memoranda titled "Hooray for Highly Effective Teaching Practices" explicitly states what supervisors are looking for expectations when collecting low inference notes and a guideline illustrating the expectations of the classroom observation process linked to targeted components of the Danielson Framework and the instructional focus across the school.
- Parents and students receive a course syllabus outlining the expectations for each course. Teachers communicate expectations like the class description, year at a glance, topics covered, supplies, grading policy, homework policy, test information and school website and Jupiter grades login, so that parents and students know early in the year the instructional expectations for each course.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Developing**

### Findings

Although the school's curricula is rigorous and coherent, the school does not yet fully implement multiple entry points so that lessons fully challenge students and engage students in high levels of thinking and discussion.

### Impact

Lessons do not consistently provide supports for a diversity of learners, particularly students with disabilities and challenge all students to their full potential, thus limiting opportunities for them to engage in higher order thinking tasks and discussions.

### Supporting Evidence

- In most cases, all students worked on the same task with no visible modifications for the most struggling or accelerated learners. For example, in one class visited all students were expected to read the same article and answer four questions. Seven students were able to complete the task and waited for further instructions, while eight students waited for additional guidance with their text to answer the questions independently. In classrooms visited, some students participated in class discussions. In one of the seven classrooms visited, students were able to explore their thinking, justify their reasoning and use evidence or examples to support their responses.
- In most classes, student discussion was limited by low level questioning or low level tasks provided by the teacher. Many questions were recall and relied on a student's memory. For example, during an English language arts lesson, the teacher asked, "What is background knowledge?", and "What will hook your reader?", and the task asked students to answer three questions to learn about background knowledge.
- Although students had opportunities to engage in partnership discussions across a few classrooms visited, there were uneven levels of student thinking and participation. During an English language arts lesson, the teacher asked students to discuss what they discovered from the text with their partners. Some students discussed the text with their partners, while other students did not interact or respond to their partner.
- In one Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class three groups of students completed the same task. Although students sat in partnerships and in small groups they did not engage in discussion with their partners or within their groups. None of the groups completed the task with five students sitting quietly waiting for the teacher, while another group had difficulty completing the task without access to supports or scaffolds to accelerate their learning.

## Additional Findings

|                           |                       |                |                   |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| <b>Quality Indicator:</b> | <b>1.1 Curriculum</b> | <b>Rating:</b> | <b>Proficient</b> |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------|

### Findings

School leaders and teachers align curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts and emphasize higher-order thinking skills embedded in academic tasks and curricula for all learners.

### Impact

The school's curricular decisions build instructional coherence across grades so that all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities demonstrate their thinking.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school uses Common Core aligned curriculum materials, such as Scholastic Code X for English language arts (ELA). The curriculum is supplemented by Curriculum Associates-New York Ready, American Reading Company. The school uses the New York State scope and sequence in science and social studies. The school's English language arts curriculum is supplemented with New York City social studies scope and sequence to improve student's comprehension, fluency and ability to demonstrate a balance of informational and literary texts and text complexity.
- Across classrooms, curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills. Some unit maps show tasks which require students to engage in complex tasks, such as a grade 8 unit task on the theme *Leadership and Legacy in History* requiring all learners to write a thesis that draws conclusions from multiple sources, write a two page paper describing their exhibits or PowerPoint presentation and research at least 3 primary and 3 secondary resources.
- The school's math curriculum Pearson CMP3 is supplemented Engage NY tasks to improve student's fluency, ability to demonstrate conceptual understanding in writing through problem solving in real world contexts. For example, a grade 8 math performance task requires students to construct a function to model a linear relationship between two quantities and compare linear relationships represented in different ways.

|                           |                       |                |                   |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| <b>Quality Indicator:</b> | <b>2.2 Assessment</b> | <b>Rating:</b> | <b>Proficient</b> |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------|

### **Findings**

Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. Assessment data is used to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subjects.

### **Impact**

Assessment data results are used to make curricula and instructional adjustments and to provide feedback to teachers and students regarding student progress and achievement.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- In most classrooms visited, formative assessment practices were embedded in daily lessons via conferring and exit slips providing for immediate feedback on student mastery of content and skills taught.
- Teachers plan based on analyses of student work and on information they have on individual students. Across most classrooms visited, teachers were conferring with individual students and giving targeted feedback to some students.
- Most students shared how they used the rubrics attached to their writing pieces as feedback regarding what they did well and how they could improve their work. One student stated, "I need to include more details in my writing." Students articulated the use of rubrics in writing and how they use the rubric to understand their next steps, yet two other students could not articulate their next learning steps in mathematics or science.
- The school uses *Jupiter Grades*, an online grading system where teachers regularly upload students' formative and summative data and other relevant information including student profiles. This data is tracked regularly by administrators and teachers to monitor student progress toward grade level goals.
- Teachers have data meetings where they are expected to complete a data form and submit to the principal. To date, the impact of this practice has enabled teachers to have a clearer understanding of student skill sets. School data has revealed that students struggle with identifying the central idea in a text, using context clues, vocabulary acquisition, multi-step math problems and maintaining stamina to complete a task. As a result of the findings, the school is refining the curriculum to become more accessible to students in order to focus on these deficits, and has increased independent reading time for students.

|                           |   |                |                   |
|---------------------------|---|----------------|-------------------|
| <b>Quality Indicator:</b> | <b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b> | <b>Rating:</b> | <b>Proficient</b> |
|---------------------------|---|----------------|-------------------|

**Findings**

Scheduled professional collaborations allow teams of teachers to promote progress towards the school goals and share student learning outcomes across grades. Distributive leadership structures support capacity building.

**Impact**

The structured team collaborations results in strengthened teacher pedagogy. Leadership structures build capacity that influence student learning.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teacher teams meet weekly to examine data and engage in making adjustments to lessons to ensure that teams understand the needs of all students. During the English language arts team meeting, teachers articulated that they are working on increasing student reading time and academic vocabulary attainment. Teachers stated that they have implemented Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) time daily during advisory for students to read independently for 25 minutes. During the meeting, teachers highlighted on a tracking sheet the names of students in their class who made progress in reading and vocabulary attainment on the benchmark 2 assessment.
- The literacy teacher team is also incorporating and emphasizing academic vocabulary not only in ELA but also in Humanities and science classrooms. Teachers adapted the Frayer Model and created more activities around vocabulary. The team also revamped and implemented the independent reading program. Teachers tracked student performance via reading log in Jupiter grades on an ongoing basis. The math teacher team is working on modifying exits slips and lesson plan revisions to include multiple opportunities for students to solve multi-step problems.
- Inquiry Teams are led by Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) teachers and are comprised of 3 -5 teachers from various content areas to offer a varied perspective. The impact of this practice to date includes the development of teacher skills to facilitate effective and frequent analysis of student work and assessment for the purpose of adjusting curriculum. TIF teachers interface with school leadership to offer their input on curriculum and instructional adjustments.