



**Department of  
Education**

*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**Park Terrace**

**Elementary-Middle School M018**

**4124 Ninth Avenue  
Manhattan  
NY 10034**

**Principal: Connie Mejia**

**Date of review: March 2, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Cheryl McClendon**

## The School Context

Park Terrace is an elementary/ middle school with 401 students from grade kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 98% Hispanic, 01% Black and 01% White students. The student body includes 51% English language learners and 04% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 91.4%.

## 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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</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>Well Developed</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>Focus</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

Commensurate with school leaders' consistently conveyed high expectations are the professional development opportunities provided to support teachers in meeting those expectations. The faculty conveys to families expectations and on-going feedback that are aligned to college and career goals and that illuminate students' progress."

### Impact

Teachers are supported towards meeting the expectations of school leaders. Parents are well informed about their children's progress.

### Supporting Evidence

- At the beginning of every year school leaders distribute and review the staff handbook, which delineates expected classroom practices, expected classroom management strategies, recommended lesson plan format, homework policy, school wide grading policy, promotion policy and other school wide policies.
- School leaders conduct focused classroom visits utilizing a template which lists pedagogical and management strategies such as setting the tone, conferring and documenting student progress, work shop model, planning and preparation and pacing to name a few. Specific foci are targeted for each observation and the feedback is shared and documented. Based upon evaluation and reflection, teachers are often scheduled for inter-visitation as an outcome of the visit. Teachers are required to follow an inter-visitation protocol to develop a plan to incorporate the observed strategies into their practice. All documentation is collected by the principal.
- School leaders and teacher leaders coordinate and/or facilitate professional development sessions for teachers in areas including understanding the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), the CAFE book comprehension strategies, scaffolds for English language learners and Common Core standards-based instruction.
- Each grade sends home monthly "Classroom Newsletters" written in English and Spanish. The monthly newsletters include expectations regarding attendance and punctuality, daily homework and study requirements and curricular highlights. As per policy, parents are encouraged to meet with teachers on Tuesdays as necessary. Teachers submit an agenda of the meetings, including parent signatures to the principal. School leaders and selected teachers provide updates on the Common Core Learning Standards, school wide programs and student progress trends at parent association meetings. The faculty facilitates parent workshops focused on test preparation, science, Title III policy and provisions.
- In September, the faculty administers a needs assessment to parents to survey in which areas they would like to be supported. Topics covered this year include how to provide homework help, working with math manipulatives, using the Internet, test prep, etc. The principal and guidance counselor also conduct individualized articulation meetings with eighth grade parents to set goals for graduation and high school.

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based teacher teamwork that is driven by school wide goals and on-going collaborative data and student work analysis, typically resulting in progress toward goals for groups of students. The school continues to fortify teacher team systems and structures to further enhance outcomes for students and teachers.

### Impact

As a result, there is improvement in teacher practice and in progress towards goals for groups of students.

### Supporting Evidence

- In the beginning of the year, teacher teams follow a 3-meeting cycle. During the first meeting consecutive grades are coupled to analyze the current unit, to make any necessary adjustments and discuss implementation plans. During the second meeting designated teachers bring student work for analysis, and the focus of the third meeting is instructional analysis; looking across grades.
- Grade level teacher team meetings are held twice a week. Each team meets on Monday and during the grade's designated common planning time. Meetings follow defined protocols. The teacher designated as recorder takes attendance and documents the focal topic, assessment used, student work analysis and next steps. When the focus is on curriculum, teachers discuss the curricular area of concern, possible revisions and supplemental resources. On the day of the visit, two teachers from the first grade team shared the outcome of a recently administered performance-based writing assessment and the intervention strategies that had been discussed at a previous meeting. Due to scheduling issues the principal shared that this meeting did not fully reflect the implementation of the structures and protocols that are typical of regularly scheduled teacher team meetings.
- Some teacher team meetings focus on sharing and analyzing trends as reflected by a specific data set. For example, teachers bring Fountas and Pinnell running record data to discuss the impact of guided and independent reading and conferring on the reading progress of English language learners. Across grades and classes, running record data reflects average progress of 2 – 4 reading levels between the first and second benchmark periods.
- At the core of all student work analysis is the rubric. During teacher team meetings teachers use Common Core-aligned rubrics to analyze student informational writing. This focus is aligned with school wide goal # 1 which projects the writing performance of all students in grades 3 through 8 to progress by at least two levels on the four point informational writing rubric.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

School leaders ensure the coherence of the school's Common Core-aligned curricula with integration of the instructional shifts. Analysis of student work and data inform curricula modifications which facilitate access and cognitive engagement for a diversity of learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities.

### Impact

On-going data-driven refinement of strategies and Common-Core curricula enhances curricula access and cognitive engagement for all learners.

### Supporting Evidence

- Within the elementary grades, Ready Gen and Go Math are implemented for English language arts and math instruction, respectively. Teachers College strategies such as the writing workshop model are integrated into English language arts planning. Across grades, there is an emphasis on inter-disciplinary informational writing. Code X Common Core-aligned English language arts curriculum and Connected Mathematics Project 3 are used in the middle school grades. The principal asserts that these curricula were vetted and selected for their alignment to the Common Core Learning standards. Teachers create standards-aligned units of study in social studies using the social studies state standards and the New York City K-8 social studies scope and sequence. In addition teachers integrate Ready Gen units that cover social studies topics. For example, grade 2, unit 1 module A – Understanding Communities served as a unit in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade curriculum – My Community and other Communities. The New York State Science standards are used in the development of units of study in science.
- Across grades and subjects, teachers utilize a standard unit plan template. Unit plans contain the time frame, the “big idea” of the unit, theme, essential questions, enduring understandings, content and/or Common Core standards, language objectives, content objectives, assessment, vocabulary, modalities of instruction and differentiated instruction strategies. Each unit plan highlights instructional shifts that are embedded in the unit. All units of instruction focus on the development of academic vocabulary. This emphasis enhances language acquisition for the predominantly English language learner population.
- Teacher teams engage in analysis of data, student work and curricula, which informs curricular refinements. For example, upper-grade teachers integrate supplemental articles from *Scholastic News* and *News ELA* with the Ready Gen curriculum to increase opportunities for students to read and respond to informational text. First grade teachers discussed adopting a backwards-planning approach in English language arts and math, beginning with end-of-unit performance-based assessments and the Common Core-aligned rubrics. This will allow them to identify necessary supplemental scaffolds.
- Teachers use the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) to plan language objectives for every lesson within every subject. This approach supports language development for English language learners, thereby facilitating greater access to the curriculum.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Curricula-aligned teaching practices that reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how children learn best, as embodied in the Danielson Framework for Teaching, are apparent across classrooms. High-level participation and critical thinking are reflected through student discussions and student work products.

### Impact

Danielson Framework-aligned teaching practices engage students in high-level participation and high-level critical thinking.

### Supporting Evidence

- A school wide focus on Danielson Framework Domain 3b, which entails using questioning and discussion techniques, is evident across classrooms. For example, in a seventh grade dual language humanities class students engaged in high level group discussions to analyze the poem *Democracy* by Langston Hughes. Each group was assigned a different excerpt for analysis based upon their comprehension levels. Excerpts ranged from literal to figurative/ metaphorical. As students talked, they recorded their responses on a group-recording sheet. The teacher circulated throughout the classroom to facilitate discussions. The task and text for a group of beginning English language learners was written in Spanish. A culminating activity was to construct a group poem on what democracy means. Throughout classrooms, students engaged in discussion and challenged each other to provide evidence from the text to justify their conclusions and inferences.
- In a fifth grade class students were tasked with developing a logical argument comparing the “unfair” treatment towards African Americans during slavery to the “harsh” treatment endured under the Jim Crow laws. The teacher modeled comparing and contrasting details from the Ready Gen text “Heart and Soul” to the Scholastic News article entitled “Dangerous Journey” using a Venn diagram. After the guided practice session, groups of students discussed the details of their texts in the context of the assignment. The teacher pulled a group of students identified for support to guide them through the task.
- Students in a sixth grade dual language class engaged in collaborative problem solving as they divided fractions using models. The teacher used a card system to randomly select students to share their work on the Smart board. Students were immersed in discussing their approaches and work and analyzing the posted solutions. Rather than provide the answer, teacher pushed students to persevere when a misconception arose, by asking clarifying questions and illuminating other possible strategies. The teacher affirmed students who used academic language to describe the math.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

Across classrooms teachers create and use curricula-aligned rubrics that provide guidance for students and standardize assessment criteria for teachers. Student progress toward goals is measured through the administration of common assessments, which also inform curricular adjustments.

### **Impact**

Curricular-aligned rubrics, common assessments and teacher feedback support student progress and inform curricular refinement.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Across the grades, teachers utilize curriculum-based, 5-trait rubrics to score student performance on Ready Gen end-of-unit performance-based assessments. Teachers provide documented feedback for students on a standard form and students reflect on teacher feedback in writing.
- Teachers administer Fountas and Pinnell running records three times per year. Running record assessment has illuminated the need for school wide implementation of guided reading and independent reading and conferring. Running record data reflects significant independent reading progress across classes and grades.
- In math, Go Math assessments are administered at the end of every unit. Third grade teachers shared that analysis of the end-of-unit assessments have informed curricular changes in subsequent units. Strands and skills in which students are deficient are spiraled into the next unit for targeted intervention.