



**Department of  
Education**

*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Park East High School**

**High School M495**

**230 East 105 Street  
Manhattan  
NY 10029**

**Principal: Kevin McCarthy**

**Date of review: March 12, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Richard Cintron**

## The School Context

Park East High School is a high school with 413 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 31% Black, 61% Hispanic, 1% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 91.0%.

## 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>Developing</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>Additional Findings</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

Leadership and staff successfully partner with families to support student progress towards high expectations connected to college and career readiness. Staff has established a culture that provides all students, including high-need subgroups, with clearly focused and effective feedback, guidance, and ongoing support toward a path to college and career readiness.

## Impact

Staff takes ownership for creating true partnerships with parents that result in increased student achievement. Students are motivated to own their own educational experience and support their peers so that they are prepared for college and career decisions.

## Supporting Evidence

- Parents mentioned how teachers are always available by phone, email or text and frequently stay late into the evening to work with students. Parents also stressed that they feel the teachers do an excellent job of preparing students for life in college and careers. An example they all spoke to was how all teachers have office hours when students can come to see them for extra help or just to talk about college and career options. Parents felt that this process has helped students to take ownership of their own education and is helping them to be more responsible and how these supports have helped them to better navigate the college application process and have helped their children to understand college and career expectations.
- Students spoke to how teachers and guidance staff regularly discuss and challenge them to take advantage of opportunities such as College Now and advanced placement classes. Students spoke to how teachers share their own personal experiences, both good and bad, concerning the colleges they attended and frequently stress to them the importance of hard work and effort. Students felt that teachers want the best for them and while they push them hard, they treat them like adults who own their own education.
- Data from the school's Quality Guide indicates that the college and career preparatory course index, which shows the percentage of students who have completed approved rigorous courses within their four years of high school, has steadily increased for the past three years and is significantly higher when compared to peer and city schools. In addition, the graduation rate and the four-year weighted diploma rate are significantly higher when compared to peer and city schools.
- The school offers a number of different opportunities to support students with college and career readiness so that all students can own their educational path from the moment they enter the school. Examples include the school's advisory program, as well as a dedicated college advisor who helps to coordinate all college seminars to support students and parents with owning their college decisions. A review of the school's faculty handbook clearly outlines expectations for staff members to support students with striving for the highest personal and academic standards. The school's website highlights a separate link that highlights all advanced placement classes offered at the school and includes video messages from students who speak to the importance of challenging themselves with higher-level classes.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Developing**

### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies and scaffolds inconsistently provided multiple entry points into the lesson and student discussions reflect uneven levels of student understanding.

### Impact

Across classrooms, there are missed opportunities to engage all learners in consistently challenging tasks and higher order thinking, thus hindering students from producing work products and discussions at high levels that is integral to their own learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- Although the principal spoke to a school-wide instructional focus for students to cite evidence in their arguments and to productively struggle, these practices were inconsistent across classrooms. A teacher in an English language arts class (ELA) asked students to defend their positions using evidence from a text. However, a social studies teacher presented a lecture to the students and when asked questions they were not required to defend their answers. In one math class, the teacher provided students with ample time to work within their groups to struggle with a problem and discuss various possible solutions as well as determine additional information needed to solve the problem. Students in another math class spent the period reviewing their homework questions as a whole class, and as questions surfaced, the teacher provided an answer instead of allowing time for students to work with their classmates to find the answers.
- Teaching strategies to encourage students to discuss and defend their ideas were evident in only some classrooms. In a science class, when students did not immediately answer questions asked of the entire class, the teacher provided the answer instead of rewording the question or asking another student to try to reword the question to start the conversation. In a math class, when students did answer questions directed to the entire class, instead of asking additional students to comment or provide additional information, the teacher added the additional information and moved on with the lesson. In a social studies class, when a student asked a question related to the topic being covered in class, instead of recognizing the question or asking if other students had additional or similar questions, the teacher moved on to the next question.
- Students across classrooms could not consistently articulate what they were learning and why it was important. In a math class where students were learning about normal curves and standard scores, when asked why they were learning the material, a student responded that they were reviewing for a test. When asked how they might use the material beyond the test the student could not state a reason. In a social studies class, when students were asked why they were learning about the Progressive Era they responded that the material would be on the test.

## Additional Findings

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

School leaders and faculty ensure curricula align with Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Curricula and tasks consistently reflect planning to provide access for all students.

### Impact

The school's purposeful curriculum decisions build coherence and promote cognitive engagement and college and career readiness for all learners, including English language learners, students with disabilities and the highest achieving learners.

### Supporting Evidence

- All departments have developed syllabi that are shared with students and parents and contain clearly defined criteria for what students need to know and what skills they need to master, ensuring coherence across grades and subject areas. All syllabi contain a course description, identified habits and skills, major assignments, a course outline, and an academic integrity statement. Students spoke to how they regularly refer to these syllabi during the year to help them stay on track with all major assignments.
- The school has created templates for all curriculum documents that have been adopted by the vast majority of teachers and has developed a process for teachers, department leaders, and administrators to peer review all teacher work products. The principal shared evidence of curriculum documents that have received feedback and been revised to ensure alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards as well as integration of the instructional shifts.
- A review of written lesson plans across all content areas revealed numerous scaffolds and entry points such as the use of graphic organizers, purposeful grouping, differentiated tasks, flexible use of time, one to one conferencing, student choice, and the identification of key vocabulary.

**Findings**

Teachers inconsistently use rubrics aligned to the school's curricula. The practice of teachers regularly checking for understanding and incorporating student peer and self-assessment is emerging.

**Impact**

The inconsistent use of rubrics, checks for understanding, and student peer and self-assessment limit teachers' ability to provide all students with actionable feedback regarding student mastery.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers collaboratively create common formative and summative assessments as well as end of marking period projects administered across grade levels and content areas and they use a rubric to assess evidence of rigor and alignment to standards.
- Student work displayed in hallways and classrooms did not consistently include rubrics with targeted feedback from teachers describing next steps for how students could improve. Although teachers and the school leadership spoke to how students use rubrics across their classes, students only mentioned how they use rubrics in their ELA and advanced placement classes for research papers and longer writing assignments. Although students did speak to how teachers provide them with feedback, they could not articulate how this feedback is specifically helping them to develop their writing skills and how they were tracking their overall growth as writers.
- Across classrooms, teachers' use of checks for understanding varied. In a global history class, while students worked collaboratively, the teacher spoke individually with each student to ensure they were on task and using their group members to support them with identifying various working conditions in factories during the Industrial Revolution. In other classes, teachers only asked questions to the whole class or called on select students to determine if all students understood and then moved on with the lesson after receiving a few answers.
- Across classrooms, teachers' use of peer and self-assessment practices varied. In an ELA class, students were encouraged to work in pairs discussing each other's point of view and the evidence to defend their ideas before sharing with the entire class. In a math class, as students worked in groups trying to determine the answer to a problem, students were encouraged to challenge each other's work by asking other students to provide proof that the solution to the problem they were working on was correct. In other classrooms, although students worked together in pairs or in groups on similar problems, they did not peer or self-assess their work or other student's work but instead waited to hear from the teacher to determine if their work was correct.

<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 collaborations. Distributed leadership structures allow teachers to have a voice in key decisions across the school.

### **Impact**

The work of teacher teams has strengthened teacher collaboration resulting in improvements to pedagogical practices and a stronger voice in key decisions affecting supports for student achievement.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- All teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations that regularly meet during the school day. Teachers spoke to how these collaborations have been instrumental in helping to improve their practice. For example, several teachers spoke to how they have grown in their ability to plan lessons to meet the school's instructional focus of students citing evidence in their arguments and productively struggling. Teachers also mentioned how regular conversations about best practices have helped them to feel more confident in their classrooms as they try new strategies. The principal discussed how he has seen growth in teachers' ability to support students with citing evidence to defend their arguments, which has been a focus among ELA, social studies, and science teacher teams.
- School leaders and teachers explained that in addition to regularly scheduled teacher team meetings, the vast majority of teachers regularly meet in small groups and engage in inter-visitations to share best strategies to improve their practice. Several teachers spoke about how these unscheduled meetings, such as the school's critical friends group that meets twice a month, weekly individual meetings with department leaders, and informal meetings with teacher mentors have all helped to develop strong partnerships among teachers across the school. They have also contributed to creating a culture where peer feedback and the willingness to grow professionally are the norm.
- Teachers spoke to how the principal meets once a week with all teacher team leaders to discuss student data, observation trends and collaboratively plan professional development connected to those findings. Teachers spoke to how this regular practice of seeking teacher input has contributed to teachers having a more active role in the direction of the school and has helped to create coherence with regard to all instructional decisions. For example, teachers spoke to how they worked collaboratively with the administration to design the school's new lesson plan format, redesigned the nature of weekly professional development this year, and worked with administration to determine the school's instructional focus.