



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

AmPark Neighborhood School

10X344

**3981 Hillman Avenue
Bronx
NY 10463**

Principal: Christine McCourt

**Date of review: December 2, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Jo Ann Benoit**

The School Context

AmPark Neighborhood School is a/an elementary school with 385 students from grade Kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 12% Black, 60% Hispanic, 19% White, and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 94%.

School Quality Criteria

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

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teacher teams regularly meet to analyze student work products and other data for targeted groups of students or students they share. Distributive leadership structures are in place and promoted at the school.

Impact

As a result of regularly meeting to analyze student work, teachers have been able to share best practices around pedagogical next steps to ensure mastery and increased student progress towards their goals. Distributed leadership structures have afford teachers opportunities to build leadership capacity and share in the decision making process at the school around student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- During the Kindergarten teacher team meeting observed, teachers were analyzing student work from one of the teachers' classrooms using a rubric to identify how students performed in narrative writing. The teachers normed their understanding of the rubric to ensure they were accurately assessing student work products and placing them in the appropriate groups: performing below grade level, at grade level and above grade level. After assessing and analyzing the student work, teachers identified the students' needs they would target: organization, conventions, and lesson pacing before they tackled small group and whole group instructional strategies.
- In the teacher interviews, teachers shared ways in which working in teacher teams and participating in inter-visitations have helped them improve their practice. Teachers spoke about collaborating to ensure coherence across the subject areas within a grade and across grades to help students make sense of the work and hear common terminology to guarantee that students receive the same message from teachers and build on skills learned from one classroom to the next. Teachers spoke about regularly comparing student data and adjusting their pacing calendars to ensure that their students had sufficient time to grasp the new concepts taught. One teacher explained "In the upper grades, we are working on the integration of literacy in social studies and science. We are constantly integrating curriculum so the students can transfer skills and knowledge from class to class and grade to grade."
- Teachers are consistently afforded opportunities to build leadership skills. They lead the teacher team meetings, mentor one another, conduct whole school learning walks, and meet weekly with the administration to foster school wide coherence which has led to the implementation of Engage NY Math curricula. Additionally teachers engage in a peer observation process whereby teachers who received a highly effective rating last year are visited and met with to share their best practices. This process was initiated and implemented by the teachers.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

The school uses common assessments, rubrics and student self-assessments to determine student progress towards goals and use the results to adjust curricula and instruction.

Impact

Although the use and analysis of regular assessments by teachers and students allow teachers to modify instruction and curricula to meet the learning needs of groups of students across grades and subject areas, it does not offer a clear portrait of student mastery thereby hindering teachers' ability to provide meaningful and actionable feedback to students across the vast majority of classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses common assessments from the Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) and Engage NY (Math), as well as the diagnostic, formative and summative assessments they've created to analyze and track students' progress towards the goals they set. Recent analysis of the data between September and November showed growth in reading benchmark for students across grades as well as growth in students' mastery of Math CCLS.
- The analysis of data has allowed teachers to create supports for different groups of students. Students receive toolkits in reading, writing and math to support them with their learning needs. These toolkits which vary based on grade and subject area, contain supports including rubrics, pointers, bookmarks with reading strategies, self-reflection checklists, how-to lists, doubles facts, visual definition of math academic vocabulary and word problem templates.
- Teachers share exemplars and mentor texts as well as peer assessments to support students in their understanding of what the expectations are and to support them in meeting those expectations.
- Student shared work products with teacher feedback including checks and comments such as, "good job". One student explained how the teacher's feedback is not usually on their work but on a different form, thus the student was not sure how she was doing in class. Another student mentioned he wished he had more work in math because that is his best subject. In one of the classrooms visited, a student expressed her wish to use a different graphic organizer because the one given to the class did not have enough space for her timeline.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school uses student work and data to develop and refine curricula that are aligned to the common core learning standards, the instructional shifts and the content standards and emphasize rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills.

Impact

The curricula offer opportunities to engage students in many project-based studies that enable access to a diversity of students developing and deepening higher order skills and college and career readiness across grades and subjects.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers work with consultants from Teachers College and Lehman College. Teachers focus on the instructional shifts with a balance of nonfiction and literary texts throughout the content areas and in fluency for math. Center-based classrooms support multiple entry points through a variety of manipulatives, opportunity for science exploration, libraries and areas for students to work collaboratively and independently.
- In the first grade, students were engaged in a mice study, with live mice, that integrated the reading of nonfiction texts, graphing and measuring, and science experiments which cumulated in a presentation of their findings at the science fair. In the 4th grade, teachers worked closely with one of their consultants to develop an integrated Standards based unit on the Hudson Valley.
- Planning is refined using data from student work and assessments including conferring notes, exit slips and formative and summative tasks allowing for students to have access to curricula and tasks that are cognitively engaging. This enables teachers to plan the pacing for each unit according to their students' needs and strengths relating to the concepts and new learning of the unit. Teachers discuss before a unit which classes will need to re-teach concepts as part of the new unit and make allowances for these classes. Teachers develop differentiated plans that articulate different scaffolds, activities and resources to engage groups of students. These include flexible grouping, guided group activities, leveled reading, differentiated tasks and manipulatives resulting in access to the curriculum across subject areas.

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers' pedagogy is aligned to the curricula, reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best, and consistently provided multiple entry points into the curricula for students.

Impact

Across classrooms, students are engaged in appropriately challenging work aligned to curricula and informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts.

Supporting Evidence

- In the majority of the classrooms visited where students were engaged in independent work, they were given choice in the work they were doing, putting them in the center of the learning process. In these classrooms, students were working collaboratively as reading partners to helping each other with skills they both have to master, in groups working on a social studies graphic organizer to find the main idea and supporting details of a nonfiction text and in science class working as a group to find the volume of different objects.
- Students are given opportunities to work collaboratively to self-assess and peer assess thus engaging in higher order thinking skills. In one classroom, two students were sharing a book and using a book mark with reading strategies to ask each other questions about the reading, two other students were working together using stop and jot on post-its to record their noticings and questions in their respective notebooks as they were reading. In music, students were constantly rotating to allow them to play particular patterns on different instruments allowing them to remain engaged as they anticipated the next round of music.
- In all of the classrooms where we saw the mini lesson, the teachers presented the topic and concepts succinctly and clearly. For example, in an ELA class, the teacher instructed students to work on their conclusion. She said, "We've started to revise and edit. Now what every writer needs is a strong conclusion, so I will give you some examples." She presented four different types of conclusions to the students and went over each one with the class to identify what made it a strong conclusion including wrapping up/summarizing, sharing an opinion/leaving the reader with something to think about and making a comparison.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for all stakeholders in the school and for families and offer feedback and support to all.

Impact

The communication of high expectations is accompanied by a high level of support for all and students and teachers set goals that they are working towards as well as understand how to monitor their progress towards those goals.

Supporting Evidence

- During the teacher interviews, teachers shared the support they receive which has helped them meet the high expectations set by the administration. These supports include regular collaboration with administration, work with consultants in small groups and individually who support planning and offer regular feedback as well as whole school inter-visitations, regular informal visits from administration and peers, weekly updates from principal on whole school issues and vertical planning meetings.
- Parents spoke highly about the school's efforts to educate the whole child. As part of the college and career readiness expectations it holds, the school understands that when a child struggles in one area, they may shine in another. The school fosters in their students social skills as well as self-regulating skills through the Ruler Approach. This approach which started as a pilot in the school is now implemented in every classroom and allows students to identify their feelings and regulate their behavior in school as well as offers ways to support them with the goals they've set.
- Parents shared the different ways the school communicates student progress including newsletters, publishing parties, family teas, and Math night allowing parents to be active participants in their child's learning. Furthermore the school fosters strong communication through structures including an open door policy with administrators and teachers, a monthly "coffee talk with the principal," and an active and supportive team of class parents who communicate regularly with the rest of the parent body.