Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Park East High School
High school 04M495
230 East 105th St.
Manhattan
NY 10029

Principal: Kevin McCarthy

Dates of Review:
November 1, 2016 - November 2, 2016

Lead Reviewer: Buffie Simmons
The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Celebration** to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Focus** to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as **Additional Finding**. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School

Park East High School serves students in grade 9 through grade 12. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Culture

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Systems for Improvement

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate schoolwide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator: 1.1 Curriculum
Rating: Well Developed

Findings
All curricula across grades and content areas are aligned to researched based standards with non-fiction and complex texts embedded into the curriculum and are strategically revised and refined based on analysis of student work and data. All learners have access to cognitively engaging and challenging tasks.

Impact
The strategic integration of research based materials results in lessons and academic tasks that promote college and career readiness for all students. The analysis of student work leads to the development of a carefully designed menu of scaffolds and strategies, and the branding of grades by concepts and skills to meet the needs of diverse learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Lesson plans are detailed and include specific learning targets and objectives. Additionally, all lessons include learning outcomes and address the key components required, as well as, lesson in context sections, a behind the scenes planning section, differentiation strategies, and student choice. Additionally, a plan B is provided that includes options if mid-class adjustments need to be made to provide access for all students to rigorous learning experiences. In a grade twelve government lesson plan, questions such as, “Why might someone support the opposing side? Who could be hurt if your side was followed?” were included. Challenges to encourage students to include specific examples of related topics in their response and to identify an underlying principle used in the scenario were an integral part of the plan, thus pushing the level of thinking needed for college readiness.

- The school’s curricula include higher order thinking skills and instructional shifts across grades and subjects for all students. All students complete research papers. For example, a task assigned in an English class required students to submit a four to six page paper written in MLA format on a topic of their choice using a minimum of six sources. Students were required to defend a position and formulate an argument drawing upon the arguments of the authors to support their point of view. English unit plans include closed reading, text-based writing, questioning, and discussion. Modules include performance-based and summative assessments, a culminating performance-based assessment, a student checklist, as well as scaffolds, extensions, and resources for vocabulary, text-dependent questions, and literature circles.

- Revisions to the curricula and lesson plans are made based on the analysis of student work and formative assessment data. Teachers systematically use protocols for looking at student work, and determine mastery of concepts for each unit of study. Revisions are then made to the curriculum to address the gaps in student learning that have been revealed. Changes have included revisions in sequence of topics, additional lessons for re-teaching within the units and the selection of culturally relevant and appropriately challenging materials to support student learning. For example, the science department realized that students were struggling with constructed responses and reading comprehension. The science teachers decided to integrate non-fiction complex texts, such as Stiff, Ten Billion, The Boy Who Harnessed Wind, Global Weirdness and Full Planet, and Empty Plates to help with their understanding of the content in a more relevant way. Presently, in Forensics, students have an independent reading assignment using the novel The Alienist by Caleb Carr, which is resulting in improvement in their reading comprehension to date.
Common assessments provide actionable feedback to support student progress. Although teachers’ assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding, student assessment practices lack strategic application.

Data from common assessments leads to adjustments that impact student learning. Teachers make effective adjustments in the classroom to meet all students’ learning needs, and as of yet, feedback from peers is imprecise.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use standards based and task specific rubrics across grades and subjects to assess student work. This consistency enables teachers to analyze work together to determine student progress within the unit of study or a particular lesson. Students say that the teachers are easily accessible and allow them to come visit them for tutoring. They believe the feedback given to them about their writing, projects and classwork has helped them to improve. One student spoke of the feedback he received about the content of his writing. The teacher’s comment indicated that it lacked details. He shared that the feedback kept him motivated to write more in depth and has helped him in his other subjects as well. Student work across the school also reflects teachers’ written comments based on rubric elements. Students discussed the use of rubrics during daily class lessons and when working on projects. Students had the rubric checklists in their notebooks for easy reference. Students use Jupiter, an online grading platform, to inform them of their progress.

- Student work samples give evidence of clear actionable feedback. For example, feedback on an AP English paper included questions such as, “What else can you say about this? Connect it to the prompt. What is Staples’ argument here about race, gender and/or class in America?” On a math assignment, a student received the following next step; “Try using the distance formula to challenge yourself.”

- In U.S History and Government, students examined the events that took place after signing the Declaration of Independence. Using specific related documents students read and then shared with their peers the major cause that led to the American Revolution. The teacher used the catch and release strategy which included highlighting some observations, posing questions, and then releasing students back to work with the new lens of noticing. The teacher stopped and noted that the students struggled with understanding the vocabulary but failed to adjust the lesson to review key concepts thoroughly. Students self-assess and give feedback to partners as part of peer-assessment. Although students are providing feedback to one another and developing their ability to give constructive feedback, some of the feedback given to them is tangential and does not always provide students with necessary details to provide the necessary guidance. Students shared writing samples that were peer-assessed and were able to explain their next learning step. Some students shared that it would be helpful to see examples of next steps so they can use them as a guide towards improving the feedback they give their peers.
### Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
</tr>
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**Findings**

Teacher practice across classrooms reflect unity around the belief that students learn best through skill development and required reflection that is informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*.

**Impact**

Teaching practices, such as catch and release and cold calling, are aligned to the curricula and reflect a common set of beliefs for ensuring student learning. Students have access to challenging and rigorous tasks that promote discussion and engagement in their learning.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The principal and teachers articulate the belief that students learn best through engagement in rigorous content, skill development, and assessment that requires them to reflect on and analyze new concepts, and demonstrate their thinking. These elements are present across classrooms to varying degrees. For example, in a chemistry class, students were asked to solve Lewis Dot Diagrams by working in groups and sharing their thinking with peers. In another class, students analyzed Shakespeare’s diction and drew conclusions regarding how Macbeth’s character developed throughout the play. The teacher posed questions that centered on the purpose of using evidence that proves a claim. Students were encouraged to use the TIEDIEDT protocol – topic sentence, introduce evidence, evidence (quote number one), discussion of evidence (number one), introduce more evidence, evidence (quote number two), discussion of evidence (number two), and connect number one and number two to the topic sentence. Students in all classrooms were engaged in directed tasks and responded to discussion prompts by the teacher.

- Across classrooms, discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation. For example, in a statistics class, the teacher asked students to explain the term outlier as well as the meaning of convenient sampling. Students polled classmates and presented their work to the class. The teacher reminded the class that in statistics there is a need to operationalize definitions in order to maintain validity with the surveys. In a global literature class, students viewed documents that focused on people’s views of science and technology before and after the Renaissance.

- In a government class, the teacher posed to the class, “Do we have the right to assemble? Is it absolute?” Students turned and talked with classmates to come to an agreed upon answer based on facts they had learned. In an English class, referring to a statement just read, the teacher posed the following: “How is this representative of how Americans saw themselves? In this poem, are they working towards something? Can you find evidence in the claim to back up the claim?” Students responded to the teacher and shared their opinion while citing evidence found in stanzas in the Walt Whitman and Langston Hughes’ poems to support their statements.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: Well Developed |

Findings

School leaders and staff systematically emphasize high expectations for professionalism and academic excellence to the entire school community. There is an established culture for learning that challenges all students and communicates expectations for their academic achievement.

Impact

The culture that exists in the school results in the demonstration and expression of student ownership of their educational experiences as well as preparedness for college and career. Communication structures ensure a high level of trust and mutual accountability between administration and staff.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers engage in professional development focused on aligning instructional practices with the expectations of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Weekly meetings address subject area content as well as grade level issues. Additionally, expectations are provided through the observation and feedback cycles. Teachers provide feedback to one another to improve quality marking period assignments. Some warm and cool feedback addresses formatting, pedagogical practices, instructional goals and planning and questioning. The New Teachers Group believes the feedback they receive through observations by colleagues and supervisors is meaningful and leads to self-reflection and improved practice. Specifically, teachers state that the feedback specific to rigor and the quality of the questions being posed during their lessons helps ensure accountability to the high expectations they must maintain to provide the best possible learning experiences for their students.

- High expectations for students include the instructional goals developed through alumni' feedback. Students understand that research is vital to their collegiate success. The school employed a full-time librarian and ensures that every student completes two research projects per year. Core values are reinforced through a scaffold of Advisory curricula, activities that are built around development of study skills, preparedness for the world of work, higher education, and citizenship. Students participate in internships and career day events that enable them to make real world connections between academic excellence, community awareness, and the school's emphasized core values. School leaders and staff have created an Open Honors program to provide students the opportunities to opt-in as an inclusive alternative to tracking. While the curriculum is rigorous for all students, Open Honors further challenges students in their tasks supporting their path to college and career.

- The school's numerous activities for students support their developing the appropriate tools to succeed in college and the work place. Rigorous coursework, including the AP Expansion Program in Environmental Science, United States History, English Language & Composition, Calculus AB, Literature, and Spanish Language & Culture are regularly offered. Parents state that the principal, administrators and staff have high expectations for excellence and success beyond graduation. Students are exposed to a variety of colleges and post-graduation opportunities and internships and feel supported and confident that they are making sound and realistic decisions regarding their college or career.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings
School leaders provide teachers with effective feedback that defines their strengths and the specific areas they find challenging. A clear and informed system for providing differentiated professional development opportunities exists and is used strategically for all teachers and staff.

Impact
The effective feedback and differentiated professional learning experiences results in improved pedagogical practices and accelerated student outcomes.

Supporting Evidence
- School leaders have strong systems for management, monitoring, and follow-up to teacher evaluation. The requirement for teachers to set professional goals ensures that the administration is able to provide targeted professional development, peer and coach support, as well as mentor teachers. An analysis of trends in teacher performance ratings identified two components where improvement was needed. A professional learning plan was then developed and the delivery of strong professional development aligned to teachers’ individual goals was implemented. For example, peer intervisitation to observe colleagues’ class lessons and precise targeted post observation feedback led to positive teacher growth schoolwide. The analysis of Advance and additional teacher observation data identified that twenty-five percent of the staff is highly effective and seventy-five percent of staff is effective.

- Through the thoughtful analysis of teacher practices, the school’s professional development plans are modified to include identified trends in teacher practice and need areas. Succession plans are currently in place where veteran staff members are strategically placed to provide opportunities to engage in extensions to their practice. For example, strong and effective teachers were asked to become lead teachers and members of the Professional Learning Committee, allowing administration to support them as they support their peers. Based on previous successes with student achievement, an additional layer of teacher support is in place, enabling the staff to benefit from the peer support for new teachers. As a result of both targeted professional development and multiple layers of support for improvements in creating more rigorous tasks, unit plans confirmed teacher’s increased ability to develop and plan challenging activities thus improving the quality of student work.

- School leaders have strategically aligned the school’s instructional foci, teacher team inquiry work, and early rounds of observations to provide targeted feedback and next steps to teachers in the components of planning and preparation and using assessment in instruction. The effective implementation of the Danielson Framework for Teaching has resulted in the development of a system for providing all teachers with frequent actionable and timebound feedback as well as clear next steps for growth while monitoring progress towards professional goals. The principal and assistant principals utilize the Advance Measures of Teaching Practice data to systematically analyze trends in schoolwide growth across domains as well as progress towards teachers’ individual goals. Trends revealed through the analysis of teacher observations are shared with faculty to provide an open dialogue regarding teacher development and allow teachers to take ownership of their own professional development. Reflection forms are completed by teachers after each professional learning opportunity providing school leaders with feedback on the differentiated supports that are provided teachers.
**Findings**

The vast majority of teachers at Park East High School are engaged in structured, inquiry-based department, and grade professional learning collaborations. Teachers have key leadership roles that focus on improved student learning and pedagogy through systematic analysis of instruction, data, and student work.

**Impact**

Inquiry work and the Friends with Bagels critical friends group has strengthened teacher collaborations resulting in schoolwide instructional coherence, effective teacher leadership, and improvement in teacher pedagogy and student achievement.

**Supporting Evidence**

- All teacher teams, such as department, grade level, advisory, co-planning teams, and working groups, are involved in structured, inquiry-based collaborations. Teachers meet weekly in their respective teams to work on their practice, analyze student work, and discuss specific instructional strategies to ensure that these collaborations improve their practice and help students make progress toward their goals. Some teachers stated that because of meeting regularly they have seen growth in their own planning, especially in addressing the instructional shifts, and in the areas of differentiation and introducing elements of the Learning Cultures model. Additionally, the school leaders provided *Advance* tracker data to show evidence of teachers improving in the competencies of the Danielson Framework for Learning, specifically around student discussion and engagement.

- At both of the team meetings teachers shared their ability to be involved in making schoolwide decisions. Teachers shared that they meet weekly to discuss schoolwide and/or team goals to ensure coherence and consistency. Three major teacher teams, including department teams, grade teams, and Professional Learning Committee (PLC), drive support for teachers and students. The department teams collaborate to write syllabi and unit plans that ensure literacy activities are embedded in content courses with coherence across classes. The grade teams examine student work to identify characteristics or trends of an individual or group to determine where support is needed. Teachers brainstorm to make adjustments, decide actions to take, and execute unified team action plans. PLC meet weekly to engage in analyzing lesson plans, student work, and discuss findings and prepare feedback for the teachers they visited. Teachers agreed these visits are helpful in improving their own practice.

- The administration strongly supports initiatives led by teachers, including mentoring of new teachers, collegial team teaching and interdisciplinary projects that encourage teachers to work together across content areas. For example, at Friends with Bagels, the critical friends' team, a math teacher shared student work where students struggled with functions and situational graphing. The teacher solicited feedback to improve pedagogical and instructional practice. Her critical friends recommended to change the structure of the assignment and to provide more student opportunity to demonstrate their thinking. Department chairs and grade level leaders collaborate across grades to make key decisions around curriculum, instructional strategies, intervisitations, and professional development of their colleagues. Teachers state that the principal trusts and empowers them to make decisions. They feel supported by the leadership and appreciate the opportunities to be creative within their subject and grade level responsibilities. This system for distributive leadership has engendered a culture of trust and mutual accountability for the entire school community advancing student learning outcomes.