Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Ampark Neighborhood
Elementary 10X344
3961 Hillman Avenue
Bronx
NY 10463

Principal: Kelly Lennon

Dates of Review:
February 6, 2018 - February 7, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Phyllis Siwiec
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

Ampark Neighborhood serves students in grade PK through grade 5. 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

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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### School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<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, Proficient</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>Area of Celebration, Proficient</td>
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### Systems for Improvement

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<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, Proficient</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>Area of Focus, Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Additional Finding, Proficient</td>
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<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, Proficient</td>
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<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, Proficient</td>
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Area of Celebration

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations to all students through the “Leader in Me” initiative and the recognizing, understanding, labeling, expressing, and regulating emotions (RULER) approach.

Impact

School leaders provide training in academic and social-emotional learning expectations and have a system of accountability for those expectations. Moreover, teacher teams and staff offer ongoing and detailed feedback and guidance/advisement supports that prepare students for their future options.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal presented a series of weekly updates that show communication with staff regarding instructional expectations with schedules, important dates, and feedback with next steps. In one reviewed update, the principal discussed the expectations of common writing agreements, stating “Creating common systems for students allows for greater cohesion across classrooms.” The principal further stated that common planning calendars should reflect student information such as assessments and feedback. An additional high expectation that was articulated was “Practice tasks and common assessments before they are given to students to ensure clarity and rigor. This allows students to learn what the writing culture at AmPark looks like and feels like.” There is a writing inquiry team that examines problem of practice that contributes to solutions for challenges in this area. The launch of the writing inquiry team in the fall began with Looking at Student Work and ran for twelve sessions. The agreements developed from the research into problems of practice in writing.

- School leaders and other staff members work as a team in study groups, planning sessions and other professional development venues, establishing a culture of professionalism that results in improvement in teaching and learning across the school. School leaders and coaches have learning walks with feedback to teachers, cycles of inquiry with specific foci, inter-visitations, mentorship, modeling, and lesson study which has enabled differentiation for staff members of varying proficiency and experience levels. There is also a mid-year check-in with each teacher and school leaders to assess goals and progress to date with student achievement.

- The student leadership development program (Leader in Me) has defined expectations in seven areas of personal, social, and academic behavior. School leaders have introduced the program across the school with teachers and students, focusing on individual traits and their impact on students, classes, and school culture. Students reported that the guidance provided is very helpful in developing friendships, work habits, and problem solving. The RULER Approach teaches all members of the school community how to build strong relationships and negotiate conflicts successfully. These initiatives are included in the social and emotional learning components of the school program and clarify expectations for students as to how they treat each other, responsible behaviors in classrooms and shared spaces, and problem-solving. There were professional development sessions offered in the beginning of the school year for launching RULER support and schoolwide Leader in Me initiative.
Findings

There is a precise list of goals and action plans that are evident in the school’s Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) and are regularly monitored and tracked for improvement. School leaders involve and communicate all improvement plans and decision making with the entire school community.

Impact

Goals and action plans are tracked but not thoughtfully adjusted in order to drive efforts to support student learning and foster social-emotional growth. Although school leaders actively communicate school goals, effective involvement of the entire school community is still a growth area.

Supporting Evidence

- Schoolwide goals for the 2017-2018 school year center around increasing writing proficiency through rigorous and integrated tasks as well as targeted small group instruction, moving further along the continuum of inclusive practice, and extending social and emotional supports to expand upon student leadership and agency thus resulting in increased ownership of the learning. One of the goals is specifically focused on improving student achievement in writing and supporting students’ use of data and/or text references to support their ideas. The result has been a 10 percentage point increase in proficiency levels in the grades three through five NYS ELA assessment, Spring 2018. The other four goals are directed at teacher practice, administrators and parents. However, goals such as these are only beginning to be thoughtfully adjusted in order to leverage change that is explicitly linked to accelerated student learning and social-emotional growth.

- The content of the school goals and the work around items such as small group instruction, a focus on writing, schoolwide implementation of The Leader in Me (TLiM) and RULER programs, and the expansion of student programs was echoed in each conversation and observed in each classroom visited. However, school leaders have yet to effectively involve and communicate goals with the entire school community as not all who were interviewed including students, teachers and parents were able to speak fully to goals and did not know specifically how certain goals were originated.

- The use of goal setting is found across the school; teachers set goals with school leadership in the fall. Students set goals either by class or as individuals in reading, writing and math. Students set goals that also have action plans. For example, the goal focused on student improvement in writing to state evidence included teachers who will collaboratively revisit current writing tasks and then, every six to eight weeks, use summative end-of-unit rubrics to assess on-demand writing progress. However, the monitoring of and thoughtful adjustments of goals, at this point, is not leveraging change that is explicitly connected to accelerated student learning.
## Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and integrate instructional shifts including academic vocabulary, real world connections in math, and the balanced use of fiction and non-fiction texts while teachers use student work and data to plan and refine curricula and academic tasks.

### Impact

Purposeful decisions regarding curricula result in coherence that promotes college and career readiness for all students. A diversity of learners have access to the curricula and are cognitively engaged.

### Supporting Evidence

- The curricular map for the year in English Language Arts (ELA) shows a balanced amount of fiction and non-fiction texts to read and write at each grade level. There is also coherence vertically with units of study and topics so that they build on each other. For example, reading non-fiction texts in either science and social studies as an integrated unit with ELA begins in kindergarten with the science unit called “Growing Expertise in Little Books: Reading for Information.” In writing, kindergarteners study how to “Look Closely” and record information like a scientist. Every grade has a reading and writing unit that has a science connection, culminating in grade four with the unit called “Reading the Weather, Reading the World.” Social studies integration also begins in the lower grades at grade one and the unit called “Learning About the World: Reading Nonfiction” and culminating in grade five with a writing unit called, “The Lens of History: Research Reports.” Using academic vocabulary, grade-level texts in close reading within the theme results in units of study that vertically and horizontally align to the Common Core Standards “stairway of complexity” that allow for all students to access the curricula and cognitively engage.

- ELA lesson plans have clear articulation under the categories Connection, Teaching Point, Model/Teach, Active Engagement, Link, Independent Practice/Small group work/ Conferring that referred to specific students and subgroups with Share and Assessments. Articulated strategies that helped students access the content, included partner reading with leveled books in which all contained challenging words, with the expectation readers could use the strategies modeled during the mini-lesson by the teacher. Thus, the curricula is accessible for a variety of learners.

- Teachers use the student work products to determine next steps and focus for all students in each class. In math lessons and units of study, students are divided into small groups based on classroom performance, exit tickets and self-reflections. In one example, the tasks were differentiated in a lesson dealing with adding and subtracting fractions. During partner work that lasted 30 minutes, one small group met with the teacher to work on this teaching point: We can use an area model to represent equivalent fractions. These are students who have struggled with previous lessons focused on fractions.

- The curricula has examples of student assessments and work that were used to plan and refine lessons. In a grade three assessment for independent reading levels document, students read 100 words out loud, finished reading silently, and then the teacher asked a series of questions, half were literal and half were inferential. The teacher then used the results to guide the next steps for each student that included a focus on practice with inferential questions for most with a decoding series included for some.
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a belief that students learn best when engaged in authentic tasks with audience and purpose that lead to student work products and discussions.

Impact

Students’ meaningful work products reflect high levels of discussion and participation across classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- Most classes displayed a workshop structure that includes a whole group presentation of information or explicit modeling and demonstration, followed by small group instruction using scaffolds or partner practice and then concluding with independent practice and a sharing of instruction that is aligned to the school leadership beliefs about how students learn best, as articulated by the principal, teachers, parents, and students. Their shared beliefs center on the gradual release of responsibility from the teacher to the students. The school community believes that utilizing this model will result in authentic transfer where students apply taught skills and strategies to any context with independence. Direct instruction is balanced with opportunities for inquiry, exploration, and investigation over the course of units and studies.

- An example of the school’s ELA workshop model in action was observed in a grade one class. The objective was “Students will be able to identify and discuss information learned about a topic with members of their book clubs.” The teacher modeled the steps as they appeared on an anchor chart as T.E.A. Time which stands for T- Topic Introduction with the prompt “My book teaches about…” E- Explain when students explain something they’ve learned about their topic with the prompt, “Something important I learned is…” and A- Ask and answer a question-club members ask a question to the reader who is sharing their book. This was followed by the students practicing a turn and talk with a partner telling what their topic is and something important they learned. The students then go off and read independently. During this time, one teacher met with a small group for explicit instruction and the other teacher conferred with students. When students move to their book clubs, one teacher met with another small group while the other moved around the room and checked in on the book clubs. At the end of the class, students would share out examples of new information they learned from their book club members. Teachers wrote down observations in columns “Speaking, Listening, Preparation and Engagement.” There was also a rubric for Reading Discussions with categories in Preparation, Speaking and Listening and a 1-3 point scale.

- After the mini-lesson in a grade five math lesson, students in partnerships decide if they need more assistance and use their red card or yellow card to signal to the teacher that they need more help. The teacher will visit with them first. Everyone else is involved in discussing with their partner the assigned task that involves equivalent fractions and a jigsaw puzzle to solve. There are a set of rules to follow in designing solutions. Once decisions are made, the partners need to come up with five different equivalent fractions. The conversations were active back and forth suggestions with partners adding more details or physically manipulating the squares to try out options.
## Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
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<th>Proficient</th>
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### Findings

Teachers use common assessments to determine student progress toward goals. Teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessments.

### Impact

Common assessment results are used to adjust curricula and instruction while checks for understanding and self-assessment are also used to make effective adjustments to meet all students’ learning needs.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams agree on learning goals and benchmark performance for most units, lessons, and tasks prior to designing or using formative assessments to measure student progress toward goals. As an example, the Math Assessments and Data Team analyzed the EngageNY fraction modules for grades three through five to identify the best practices for modeling fractions. What was observed in student work was that students were modeling fractions without demonstrating understanding of partitioning, benchmarks, and the size of the whole. In addition, teachers acknowledged that they were not teaching students how to choose appropriate tools and models based on context. Teachers also do not directly teach students how to self-create models to use as part of their thinking process as evidence of their reasoning. The focus then was to develop an assessment that will allow teachers to track improvements in the use of self-created models such as number lines and rectangular fraction models. Further, the team wanted to incorporate the use of tools and modeling into the current fractions units. The team after several sessions, research and lesson demonstrations, designed an assessment for each grade level that use fractions as essential components of the task with increased complexity as the grade levels progressed.

- There are collections of data kept in various databases according to the type of information stored. Evidence produced showed that assessments are administered, but results are limited in gaining an overview of how well the school is doing, except for NYS ELA and math assessments that show an annual summary for the last three years. Data from the last three years show trends in ELA: Levels 3 and 4 for grades three through five show for 2015 44 percent; for 2016 49 percent and for 2017 40 percent for general population. For students with disabilities in 2015 11 percent scored at Levels 3 and 4; in 2016 16 percent; and in 2017 6 percent. For ELLs in 2015 and 2016 the sub group contained too few students to disaggregate the data. However, in 2017, 25 percent of ELLs scored at levels 3 and 4. In NYS Math assessments, in 2015 52 percent scored at Levels 3 and 4; 49 percent in 2016; and 46 percent in 2017 in general education. Students with disabilities in 2015 24 percent scored at Levels 3 and 4; in 2016 21 percent; and in 2017 19 percent. For ELLs in 2015 and 2016, again, too few students to be disaggregated while in 2017, 11 percent scored at Levels 3 and 4. Specifically teachers stated that they use pre and post assessment data, running records in reading while school leaders stated that teachers use formative and summative assessment data to both plan and refine instruction.

- Teachers developed checks for understanding that informed adjustments with revisited instruction to meet the needs of all students. In a grade five math class, students used green cards to designate understanding of tasks, yellow cards if unsure and red cards to designate confusion or inability to continue working. The teacher scanned the classroom, while working with table groups in order to address students' needs including one-on-one support or regrouping students to revisit instruction. Students also self-assess with their exit ticket responding to “What is your level of understanding about creating equivalent fractions?” with a ratings scale that followed from “confused” to “expert” with three more gradations in between. Another example of checks for understanding occurred in a grade two ELA Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class where teachers conferred with students as they moved around the room. The class was working on refining poems they had written by adding breaks and punctuation. Teachers asked about how students were using the two new techniques as students read aloud their work in a one-on-one check-in.
### Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

Across grades most teachers meet regularly in structured collaborative planning and inquiry teams. Teams of teachers assess student work and instructional planning documents to assess student learning for groups at their grade level.

**Impact**

Teacher team work promotes the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. The analysis of student work and subsequent discussions about teaching strategies improve student work and strengthen teacher capacity across the school.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Grade level teams facilitated by coaches or teacher leaders, engage in collaborative inquiry to look at student work products and determine adjustments to instruction in order to address the learning needs uncovered in the process. In addition to individual student work, they also look at data from pre and post assessments to identify learning gaps and develop follow-up strategies and methods to improve teacher practice. Instructional shifts along with Common Core standards provide a shared language and expectation for building a foundation across teaching teams.

- The Math Assessment and Data Team were observed and provided documentation of students developing models of area exploration in math. Teachers representing three grade levels picked one student work example that was determined to be developing and the other proficient. One of their noticings was that one-third of the students picked graph paper while the other two-thirds used regular notebook paper. Trends were observed in that grade three students tended to use shading and labeling while grade five students utilized graph paper. Wonderings included what was the metacognitive processes in place as each student selected their method of representation. Implications for instructional practice will be followed up in the following week. When asked what the impact has been of teacher team work on teacher’s instructional capacity and student achievement, teachers replied that there is more consistency and progression across the grades. With increased awareness of student’s needs and skills across and between grades, teachers use each other as supports by knowing expectations for the next grade and the one before.

- There are a wide range of teacher teams in place that allow for vertical and horizontal planning, as well as inquiry, social and emotional work, and student support. Teacher teams include Pupil Personnel Team, Student Implementation Team, and Professional Learning Communities that focus on Writing, Reading, Math, Social and Emotional Inquiry Teams. The Leader in Me Action Teams focuses on Leadership Environment, Shared Leadership, Leadership Events, and Home-School Connections along with grade level teams, and mentorship teams. Teachers stated that they appreciated having teams that include teachers from other grade levels and teaching areas of expertise as it helps broaden the knowledge shared and increases the collegiality and understanding of content across the grades.