



# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**Sunset Park Preparatory School**

**Middle School 821**

**4004 4 Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 112 32**

**Principal: Lola Padin**

**Dates of review: April 20 - 23, 2007**

**Reviewer: Ken Bryan**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Sunset Park Preparatory School is a small middle school serving 430 students from 6<sup>th</sup> grade through 8. The school's ethnic composition is 77% Hispanic, 10% Black, 8% Asian and others and 5% White. The proportion of students eligible for Title 1 funding is 73.36%, which is line with similar schools. There are 32 special education students and 28 English language learners, whose first language is mainly Spanish. The student attendance rate is 93% which is slightly better than similar and City-wide school averages.

The school has been established to meet the needs of highly motivated, high achieving students. Students are allocated places according to their high levels of achievement, supplemented by another 15% of students achieving at level 1.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The very visible principal is highly respected by the school's community and provides very clear leadership and direction.
- The generation and use of data very effectively informs student performance, the instructional programs, professional development and goal setting.
- The high quality of the instructional and interventional programs has resulted in the dramatic improvement of English language arts and mathematics scores.
- Instruction is consistently of a high standard and the support of the school's cabinet is a strong feature of the school.
- Driven by data, professional development is made a high priority by the school and is excellent in quality.
- Collaboration between members of the faculty is a very powerful feature of the school, both in terms of intervisitations of classrooms and in planning.
- The school very effectively challenges its higher achieving students by providing accelerated programs and by offering Regents exams to 8<sup>th</sup> graders.
- The school is very well organized on a day-to-day basis and is underpinned by an extremely positive ethos which combines challenge and achievement.
- The school offers a stimulating range of extra-curricular and special academic programs to meet the needs of all students.

### What the school needs to improve

- Further develop the use of disaggregated raw score data to set challenging and quantifiable targets for cohorts and sub-groups.
- Provide more opportunities for the use of information technology for planning and instruction.
- Continue to develop the faculty's confidence in the use of data by providing more professional development.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a well-developed school.**

Sunset Park Preparatory School very successfully combines high expectations and professional rigor with high student performance. It has a welcoming and involving culture where everyone is valued. Teachers know their students and they set challenging goals resulting from effective data gathering and analysis. The professional development provided for the staff is very effective and the high quality of the instruction is a consistent feature. Professional development is differentiated according to need and the programs are determined by the data. The programs for all students are of a high standard. This includes the programs for special education students and for those who are gifted and talented. Programs for the highest achieving students are an excellent example.

Enhancement and enrichment programs have resulted in excellent gains for the school. Many students follow high school programs and Regents exams are often passed early. The whole school community, including students, parents and the staff are actively engaged in the learning process and student achievement is very high. Without being complacent, Sunset Park Preparatory School is extremely well led by its energetic, committed principal and her team. Collaborative teamwork and a sense of empowerment provide the foundation for the school's undoubted success.

### **How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria**

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.**

#### **This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The school effectively uses a variety of assessment data to inform planning, the setting of goals and the creation of differentiated individualized learning programs. Through the guidance of the principal, the assistant principal and the rest of the very effective cabinet, grade teachers very efficiently use objective assessments to track the progress of their students. Systems for comparing performance are robust and through the use of the diagnostic report data and summative and formative assessments, parents, students and teachers are actively engaged in the learning process together.

The needs of all learners are met through the careful analysis of school data. Intervention programs for the small group of English language learners and the needs of special education students are effectively informed by the outcomes of assessments. Coaches, who regularly meet with grade level staff during the useful common preparation times, support planning for intervention and general education programs. There is on-going articulation between the classroom teacher, academic intervention specialists and the guidance and parent counselors. The school is very proficient at comparing individual student progress through the use of interim assessments. The effective use of teacher observations, the compiling of annotated portfolios and thorough use of student conferences underpin the more formal City and State assessments. Comparative data is analyzed rigorously at grade and whole school level on a regular basis and the teachers

competently revise and adapt their goals and programs accordingly. Rigorous comparisons are made with other similar schools and with their own past performance.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student’s next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student’s learning.**

**This area of the school’s work is well developed.**

Data is effectively used to drive the school's goal-setting agenda. Data lies at the heart of the Comprehensive Education Plan the planning for instruction, the formulation of intervention programs and the tracking of individual student progress. The Comprehensive Education Plan, the curriculum map and the data analysis files clearly show a link between data and goal setting. The students are grouped heterogeneously across the school and this strategy has led to an increase in the number of students performing at or above grade level in English language arts and mathematics. There has been a reduction in the number of students performing below grade level. The school successfully uses data to inform the work of the academic intervention teachers who have provided extended day classes and ‘push-in’ programs for students with personal intervention plans. Teachers regularly meet in grade teams to collaboratively set challenging goals for students.

The school rigorously uses raw score diagnostic data to set targets for improvement. This information is regularly communicated to parents who are encouraged to access the data on-line. Individual, class, cohort, subject and whole school data is rigorously compared with the performance in previous years and with other schools. Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activities of all members of the school community through grade meetings, the effective use of common preparation time, the workings of the school leadership team, academic intervention meetings and regular communications with parents. The availability and the analysis of data drive this process. The school has high expectations for students and parents and particular attention is given to improving the performance of students in greatest need of improvement.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.**

**This area of the school’s work is well developed.**

The school effectively aligns the instructional activity, resources and student engagement around well-informed plans, which focus upon student learning. The curriculum maps clearly demonstrate pace and are regularly adapted to reflect differentiation. The school has very high expectations, both in terms of the levels of student achievement but also for the faculty. The high quality of instruction is consistent across the school. Teachers are held accountable for improving instruction and for student outcomes. There is an open and transparent culture of professional development and the teachers use well-developed systems for monitoring student progress and setting goals. Teachers plan and differentiate their instruction based upon the needs of the students. This process is informed by very effective interim assessments, data gathering and analysis. The school makes imaginative budgetary, staffing and scheduling decisions which clearly impact on student progress. Examples of this creativity include the use of Columbia University Teachers’ College professional development programs and the purchasing of class libraries. Student attendance is high. The systems used to challenge absence are rigorous and consistent. The students are very engaged, their needs are met and the

classes are stimulating and motivating. Students enjoy learning and they have developed excellent relationships with the teachers. Through the guidance of the parent coordinator, the parents are kept very well informed.

**Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

Teachers have been selected according to their expertise and upon their capacity to use data rigorously. The principal is careful to select staff who can challenge and motivate the students. Many of the teachers are young, dynamic and able to gather and scrutinize data effectively and the vetting process is very rigorous. The principal has high expectations for her faculty both in terms of pedagogic proficiency and its ability to improve student performance. Staff development is a strong feature of the school. All programs respond to the needs of the staff following rigorous reviews. An instructional team involving the mathematics and English language arts coaches and the special education teacher meets regularly to monitor the quality of instruction and learning. The use of the weekly common preparation time is a powerful feature.

There is a strong sense of collaboration and support in an open and transparent atmosphere of trust and respect. Ideas, methods and resources are frequently shared. The principal visits classrooms each day and she demonstrates effective instructional leadership for her faculty. The teachers continually review and adapt their instructional programs during grade conferences and common preparation. Again, the instructional team guides the process. This is an influential group which has ensured that the highest quality of teaching is maintained. The principal is highly respected and she provides excellent instructional and operational leadership.

The use of partnerships with outside bodies is another strong feature. This includes preparation for high school, an arts partnership, the school's liaison with Columbia University Teachers' College and collaboration with an astrophysics program.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The school frequently reviews its goals and plans. Goals set by the region are reviewed and progress is considered accordingly by the school's cabinet. The Comprehensive Education Plan is written yearly and modifications are made throughout the year by all stakeholders through rigorous scrutiny of interim assessments. The Comprehensive Education Plan is seen as a working document and it is an effective tool for whole school improvement. It is well evidenced and there are clear links to school improvement. Student data is continually used to inform the school self-review process. The links between data, goals, curriculum planning, professional development and student performance and the involvement of all members of the school community are firmly integrated.

Information gathered from periodic assessments is constantly reviewed in light of individual and school-wide goals. Faculty conferences and the frequent school leadership team

meetings are used very effectively to consider student data and to set further goals for improvement. Curriculum maps are regularly modified, taking into account the achievements of the students. This degree of collaboration is another very good feature.

The cycle for setting short, medium and long-term goals begins in June each year and these plans and strategies are constantly reviewed and modified throughout the year. The school has adopted a very agile and flexible but robust strategy for school self-evaluation.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Sunset Park Preparatory School (MS 821)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>			<b>X</b>

<b>Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.</b>	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>			<b>X</b>
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students*</li> </ul>			<b>X</b>
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>		<b>X</b>	
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>

\* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

<b>Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.</b>	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.			<b>X</b>
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.			<b>X</b>
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			<b>X</b>
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.			<b>X</b>
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>

<b>Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.</b>	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.			X
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X
<b>Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.			X
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.			X
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X
<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.			X
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.			X
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.			X
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.			X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X