



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Lower East Side Preparatory High School

High School 515

**145 Stanton Street
New York
NY 10002**

Principal: Ms Martha Polin

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Reviewer: Mike Sutton

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The school is an alternative transfer school in the lower east side of Manhattan. It has 535 students on roll, from two different groups. It provides placements for American transfer students who have been unable to succeed in other schools and also for students from overseas, mainly from rural areas of China, who have just arrived in the United States. Around 90% of students enrolled are in the latter category.

Asian students make up 92% of the student population with 4% Hispanic and 4% African American. Over 75% of the students are English language learners. The great majority of students speak Chinese as their first language. Only 1% are special education students. All students are eligible for Title 1 funding, which is a much higher proportion than for City schools.

The students are all in grades 10 through 12 but most are over age and under credit for graduation. They are all between 17 and 21 years old. There are significant changes to the student population during the year and the average length of enrollment is just over 2 years. The attendance rate is 92%, which is higher than for City schools and much higher than most transfer schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- There is clear, direct leadership from the principal with very good support from the two assistant principals.
- There is excellent support for all students when they start at the school and very strong ongoing help from the intervention and support teams.
- There is a strong family atmosphere, where all students are valued and are very well known to teachers and support workers.
- Behavior is excellent, classrooms are orderly and learning takes place in a very positive climate.
- The school focuses very strongly on academic success and continued education at college and most students achieve very well in a short time.
- Professional development of staff is strong and teachers look to continually improve their practices.
- There are very strong relations with families and the students feel safe, secure and well cared-for at school.
- The school makes astute use of its budget as well as scheduling and staffing arrangements to meet the needs of the students.
- The school makes very good use of a wide range of external partners and institutions to broaden students' horizons and enrich their education.

What the school needs to improve

- Make maximum use of data in constructing and monitoring development plans.
- Improve strategic planning by better use of the Comprehensive Education Plan to provide more explicit direction to departmental teams in the school.
- Raise the profile of the administration and promote greater consistency in instruction through more frequent informal visits to classrooms.
- Take more account of students' views regarding instructional techniques.
- Continue to develop teachers' instructional skills, particularly in differentiating work for students and in using performance data to accelerate students' acquisition of the basic skills of reading and speaking English.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The school achieves remarkable results with a great many of its students. It has a consistent 20% graduation rate, which for students who arrive speaking no English or who have fallen well behind graduation requirements elsewhere, is a very substantial success. There is a deep level of care for the students, which together with carefully planned procedures on enrollment, gives them the initial confidence and the security necessarily for academic success. The team of support workers links very effectively with teachers and families to ensure all students feel safe and well cared for. Attendance levels and standards of behavior are extremely high. The school fosters well, the developing maturity of the young adults, but does not seek or use the students' own views to help it plan for the future.

The teachers have very significant successes, particularly in mathematics, science and Chinese at Regents examinations. The skills needed to be successful readers are not always securely established in the initial stages and some students then struggle with more demanding texts. Neither are enough opportunities provided for students to practice and develop their oral skills.

The management of the school is strong but relies too much on professional intuition. The school does not make the maximum use that it might from the wide range of data which it gathers, to construct and monitor development plans. Senior staff have a good overview of the school generally but do not get into classrooms sufficiently frequently to check the consistency of teaching strategies.

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 proficient with some well-developed features.

The school collects a wide range of data. It checks carefully on credits accumulated at other schools in the United States and those that can be transferred from schooling in China. It uses its own assessments with new students to determine their needs. It constructs individual student plans through discussions with support teams and teachers.

The school checks the progress of students learning English twice within the three marking periods to give a very clear picture of each student's progress. It analyzes this information to gain a secure view of the performance of different subjects and classes.

A further range of information such as attendance data, drop out rates and time that students stay on roll is gathered and analyzed for trends and patterns. The school analyzes most data by individual student only, because numbers in sub groups are too small to be of statistical use. For example, there are only five special education students and less than 50 students who have transferred in from other City schools. Analysis by grade too, is unhelpful as students work in mixed grade classes depending on their prior

achievements. However, the school misses some opportunities to disaggregate data by gender or by enrollment criteria.

The school compares itself to other similar schools in broad terms, but there are no schools with sufficiently similar characteristics to make deeper comparisons that are meaningful. It understands its own progress well and can show clearly just how much it has improved in the last five years. For example, the pass rates for students in Regents English and mathematics have risen from 36% to 82% and 70% to 98% respectively.

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 proficient.

The transient nature of the school’s enrollment, with just 70% staying for more than a year, makes long range targets difficult to set. The broad targets it sets in the Comprehensive Education Plan, such as a 2% increase in graduation rate, are realistic.

The school’s Regents examination pass rates are highly dependent on the numbers of students arriving mid-year, most of whom have little or no understanding of English. The school has taken a measured and strategic decision not to enter them for Regents English, where they have very little chance of success because they have not been learning English for long enough. This means that the school rarely meets the rate of student-entry for the examination required under the No Child Left behind Legislation. Nor is it likely to meet the annual pass rates for English language arts under the same legislation. The school presents a convincing case that it meets the needs of individuals well and that to undermine their fragile but growing academic confidence by unrealistic entry into examinations would be counter-productive.

The school has a vision that has been established by the administration. Most planning takes place at this level and there are relatively few opportunities for teachers to collaborate in strategic planning. Most development planning is based on professional experience. The school has a good range of quantitative data, which is well analyzed but there are no clear mechanisms to ensure that teams of teachers engage sufficiently with this data to understand where they might make further improvements. The school conveys very high expectations to students and their families. The students respond with an intense desire to learn that is evident in most classrooms. Their sights are firmly set on continuing their education beyond college and the school celebrates such successes proudly and openly.

The school strongly drives improvement by focusing on each individual student. It is less forceful in targeting particular subjects for improvement because improvement planning does not permeate sufficiently to all parts of the school.

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 has an appropriate curriculum for its students. For those who need to learn the rudiments of the English language there is a carefully structured series of English language learner classes, which takes students towards the levels of competence needed to access the mandated curriculum. The school supports well, the students' own home language and ensures that they gain maximum examination successes in this. The school accelerates students through the English language learner structure as quickly as possible. However, the students' basic decoding skills for reading, are not secure enough to sustain their understanding of higher level texts, particularly in subjects requiring a specialized vocabulary.

Bi-lingual teachers make excellent use of their linguistic skills to support students but occasionally slip back into their main first language when students need more exposure to an English medium. The students, too, say they want more opportunities to converse in English and this is reflected in feedback to the school from previous students who are now at college. Current development planning does not reflect this need. The teachers work extremely hard to ensure students have the maximum chance to learn and make progress. They want the best for them and see their role as key to bringing this about. They work hard to adapt aspects of the mandated curriculum to meet the linguistic needs of students, but do not always differentiate work sufficiently to ensure this.

The school makes astute use of schedules and budgets. The overall school schedule is designed to afford a good mix of short and extended periods for more concentrated lessons. The purchase a substantial number of palm-held computers is proving very successful. Students make excellent use of the devices' translation facilities as well as their range of standard computer functions. The school has a good range of technical equipment and teachers' requests for resources are largely met.

The staff know and respect their students. They respond well to their individual needs and circumstances. The different student support teams play a vital role, which is widely appreciated by parents and students. In response, the students put maximum effort into their lessons and apply themselves continuously to learning. The work stretches them to their academic limits, as teachers strive to balance the needs of an examination curriculum with the language development of the students.

Attendance is high because the school is welcoming and the students feel safe and well cared for. They learn in an atmosphere that is very largely free from unacceptable behavior. The school's has very secure procedures to ensure high attendance.

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.

The school hires teachers on their abilities to collaborate and commit to continued learning. They must also show the capacity to adapt to its particular characteristics and to engage with the students. The school ensures there is sufficient knowledge about data collection and analysis amongst senior leaders. The need to ensure sufficient bi-lingual staff and support staff with the right qualifications and approaches is very well met. Professional development is strong. The school constantly seeks to update its own knowledge, instructional skills and practices. It uses a very effective approach where teachers model lessons or aspects of teaching at meetings, making innovative use of students in so doing.

The school's developments and initiatives are not fully effective because the administration does not make sufficient visits to all classrooms. All teachers get good quality mandated observations and new teachers get the right amount of support and advice from senior staff and external coaches. The school leaders do not make sufficient routine informal visits to keep a close watch on specific aspects of teaching. A few weaknesses remain unchecked, such as the regularity and quality of differentiation of work for students, the number of opportunities for students to use spoke English or the degree to which a few teachers set unproductive work such as copying.

Departmental meetings take place monthly and are attended by one of the administrators. Agendas are generated by the individual departments and reviewed at a senior level. School and departmental goals drive the agendas, but some departments are more effective in monitoring and evaluating plans than others.

The principal is widely respected by the whole school community. Much improvement in recent years is down to her leadership and the support from her two assistants and other key staff. Daily routines run well and communications are clear and systems secure.

The school makes outstanding use of a wide range of external partners, associates and professional colleagues to provide enrichment and guidance for students. Leadership development is strong and the student council is active. It recently conducted a survey of students to see what improvements they would like. The school leadership has not taken enough account of this or probed deeper into some of the emerging issues.

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 proficient.

The school has one main development plan, reviewed towards the end of each school year when a new one is constructed. It is not revised systematically or adjusted on the basis of in-year changes to student population or results from the regular assessments. The data that it gathers on achievement has good potential to provide the information in needs to check the progress towards targets in the plan but is not used with sufficient regularity to ensure this. Most planning and development takes place intuitively, although it is always focused on improving outcomes for students.

The school has sufficient data, which is regularly evaluated to check on progress between different classes and different subjects. Although this information is used to support particular teachers and to ensure that their assessments are aligned well with marking guidance, the information does not clearly feed into any development plan.

The information gathered by teachers through their in-class assessments and quizzes is used well to make adjustments for individuals and for example to move students from one English language learner group to the next.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Lower East Side Preparatory High School (H.S.515)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score		X	

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.	∅	✓	+
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"> • each student, classroom, grade level, 			X
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"> • ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 		X	
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"> • all other categories of interest to the school* 		X	
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.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1		X	

* 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.

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.	∅	✓	+
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.		X	
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.		X	
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
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.			X
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.	X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 2		X	

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.	∅	✓	+
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
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X
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.	∅	✓	+
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
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X
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.	∅	✓	+
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		
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X	