



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Humanities Preparatory Academy**

**High School 605**

**351 West 18 Street  
New York  
NY 10011**

**Principal: Barnaby Spring**

**Dates of review: March 1 - 2, 2007**

**Reviewer: Mike Doran**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Humanities Preparatory Academy is a small 9th to 12th grade high school located in a multicultural neighborhood on the mid west area of Manhattan commonly referred to as 'Chelsea'. The school occupies a part of one floor within a building shared with two other high schools, and its work is constrained by very limited accommodation and facilities.

The school is designated as a transfer school for students transferring from other high schools in the region in addition to the normal 9th grade intake. The school has also recently become an Empowerment school, giving it more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their school community. Empowerment schools are free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with, and benefit from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements. Additionally, the school is currently engaged in a research project to design its own (DYO) periodic assessment arrangements, and as such has DYO school status. Classes are heterogeneously grouped in terms of both age and ability level across most subject areas.

The school has a small population, with a capped enrollment of 175. Its current population comprises 45% Hispanic and 38% Black, and 10% White students with the remaining 7% coming from Asian and other backgrounds. Compared with other City schools the proportion of English language learners (2%) is low, but the proportion of special needs students (13%) is high. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

The principal took up post in an interim capacity at the beginning of the current school year, and his appointment was subsequently made substantive in February 2007.

The school has a distinctive and strong culture of social justice and democracy, distributive leadership, and has non-traditional student disciplinary structures.

Attendance at 84% is slightly above that of City schools.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The recently appointed principal provides very good leadership through clarity of vision and direction, openness and accessibility, and a hands-on style.
- The principal is supported by professional, committed and talented teaching staff.
- The parents value highly the work of the principal and the wider school staff.
- The school provides an orderly, safe and very supportive learning environment to which students respond with good behavior and positive attitudes to learning.
- The teachers know and care for their students.
- High expectations, shared with students and parents, drive the work of the school.
- Teachers are very supportive of one another, and they are well supported by opportunities for professional development.
- The school has a strong culture of learning and personal development rooted in a widely held core value system.
- The quality of teaching overall is very good and engages the students.
- The school provides a wide range of opportunities within and outside the school day to promote academic and personal development, to enrich the curriculum and to support students causing concern.

### What the school needs to improve

- Further develop induction and orientation programs, underpinned by base-line assessment, for incoming transfer students.
- Develop consistency in the use of periodic assessments that to better inform differentiation in lesson planning.
- Ensure that professional development planning is fully aligned to the schools' needs through the monitoring of classroom practice.
- Further extend the analysis and use of whole-school performance data in monitoring the progress of the school's Comprehensive Education Plan.
- Continue to develop the use of individualized learning plans for all students, with explicit academic and personal development targets, shared with students and their parents, setting out next steps in their learning and the particular support needed.
- Further develop the use of computer technology as a tool for teaching and learning, and to support the management, analysis and use of student data.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

**This is a proficient school in which there are well-developed features.**

In the short time since his appointment, the principal has successfully established himself in his leadership role, committed to the school and its distinctive ethos, and with a determination to take the school forward in pursuit of its core aims. The school has a strong commitment to enabling students to achieve both academically and in terms of personal development and draws upon expertise within and outside the school to give students curriculum breadth and support, and further opportunities to achieve, to extend themselves, and prepare for successful adult lives. Rates of graduation, college acceptance and drop-out are in line with or better than City school averages.

The school staff know their students well, and this underpins high levels of individual support for the students with timely intervention and involvement of parents. The teaching staff work collaboratively and reflectively, and are increasingly well supported by effective leadership and by key teachers to meet the needs of the students through differentiated instructional programs across all subjects and grades informed by the developing use of student performance data.

The school has identified an appropriate range of areas of its work that require further development. As a result of the impact of improvements that have been made over a comparatively short time, the school is well placed to implement these plans.

### 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.**

The school collects and updates a wide range of data relating to current student performance both academic and behavioral. The school is a member of the New York Performance Standards Consortium and has a waiver from the City Education Department to use performance based assessment instead of Regents examinations. With DYO Empowerment status, the school is currently developing a proficiency based assessment system mapped to the performance based assessment criteria, which are in turn aligned to and exceed the Regents requirements.

The student portfolios are carefully marked by teachers with helpful comments on improvement. Students personally present their portfolio work for final assessment to a panel that is externally moderated through the Consortium. Detailed mid-term assessment reports and narratives are produced by each student's teacher to provide detailed monitoring of the student's current progress and performance. These reports are scrutinized by the principal, subject teams, and by the school's counselor and social worker. The progress of special needs students is similarly monitored. The progress of students transferring into the school from other high schools is closely monitored through a

pilot induction and orientation program to ensure that their transition can be made as effective as possible. The data arising from this is used by teachers to match initial teaching to students' individual needs although the lack of software appropriate to the collation of class data makes this an arduous process.

In addition to monitoring academic performance data, the school also collects data about student behavior and attendance, punctuality, homework, behavior and application in class, and collaboration with others. However, the school has yet to systematically measure and analyze performance over a longer timescale, in comparison with similar schools, across classes and subjects, and in relation to patterns of under-achievement in specific student groups.

**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.**

The analysis of data to inform collaborative lesson planning, learning goals and next steps is strong in English and, to a slightly lesser extent, in mathematics. The school has made a good start in the integration of data from teachers' assessments in the classroom into systematic departmental planning in these subjects. However, leaders recognize the need to extend this good practice into other subject areas.

A recent development has been the transfer students' induction and orientation program to improve attendance, academic and behavior outcomes. This planning has been carried out by a team of teachers including a lead teacher who has carried out systematic monitoring against goals for improved attendance, attitudes to school, responsibility for learning, and credit accumulation. This points the way forward for future collaborative planning and goal setting, and for targeting areas for improvement at a whole school level.

In the context of a small school community, the teachers have high expectations of their students that are shared with parents, and know and care for them well. There is a collective culture of support amongst the staff that identifies and targets appropriate interventions for individual student causing concern or at risk. Throughout the school week there are structured opportunities, such as in advisory groups, for all students to meet with their advisory teacher, and to raise issues concerning them about their lives inside or outside school. Consequently, concerns are quickly picked up and addressed by individual teachers and the whole school community.

The school communicates clearly with parents and provides opportunities to involve them in their children's learning. Parents appreciate the ready access they have to staff and the timeliness with which teachers let them know of any concerns. A rigorous system of progress reports, record cards and teacher-parent conferencing ensures that students and their parents are kept well informed of progress. The school has made a good start in developing the use of individualized learning plans for students to further promote shared goal setting and associated planning for next steps in learning.

**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.**

Teachers and leaders are fully involved in curriculum development as the school reviews and evaluate the impact of teaching on student attainment. Current research is used well to stimulate reflection and thinking about current practice in the classroom, and at a whole-school level. This has assisted the school in successfully adapting the mandated curriculum and developing instructional programs to meet the needs of its students. Teachers understand their accountability for their students’ learning. There are good examples of effective differentiation of the instructional programs through the use of student data which actively engage students in their learning. Students feel safe and supported in trying out ideas and solutions, and are encouraged to respond to challenges without fear of ‘being wrong’. Student attendance is a high priority, and at 84% is slightly above that of City schools. Attendance is monitored closely and pursued relentlessly with students and, where necessary with their families, by staff at all levels including the principal.

Staff know their students well, and there is a high level of mutual respect between teachers and students. Students and teachers regularly meet in advisory groups to reflect and discuss issues of concern relating to academic and personal development. Where conflict arises between any individuals in the school, the issue can be brought to a ‘fairness committee’, a teacher-student panel, which arbitrates between those involved to reach an understanding.

Scheduling, staff assignments, and budget setting are well focused on identified needs. The identification and assignment of lead teachers has had a positive impact on staff professional development. The school continues to develop even more effective use of student data to inform aspects of whole school planning such as in the identification of patterns of underachievement in particular student groups.

**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.**

Although recently appointed, the principal has gone a long way in the introduction of distributed leadership and in assessing its impact. Good systems of staff selection using a range of criteria and procedures have been introduced which reflect the school’s high expectations of staff and students. The process has yet to take full account of the capability of applicants to make use of student performance data.

Professional development is has a high priority. It is well planned and managed by the principal in close consultation with staff. Staff expertise is well utilized in supporting teachers and teams in collaborative planning and teaching. Staff readily reflect on and share their teaching practice in subject teams. The school is developing the use of school-wide student data, in particular the identification of patterns of underachievement in particular student groups.

The principal has the capacity and determination to drive through school improvement plans, and to make any organizational changes to the school that are needed to achieve this. The principal regularly and systematically observes instructional practice and provides feedback to teachers. Teachers demonstrate their commitment to their students in their willingness to learn from each other. These activities, in turn inform planning for professional development.

The school is also committed to providing for the development of students' personal skills and interests, and offers a good range of enrichment and extension activities. The school has successfully established numerous partnerships with external professionals and organizations, such as the Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound, that are now central to the work of the school and provide a distinctive enhancement to the academic and personal development program for students.

**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 strong collaborative planning arrangements in relation to current curriculum and instructional programs that involve various groupings of teachers. Interim and final test results and regular diagnostic measures of students' progress are used to monitor, revise and adapt plans at the individual, student and class level through the year, and to target student interventions. This has yet to systematically inform whole school planning and goal setting.

The Comprehensive Education Plan is used as a working document, reviewed during the year and overseen by the school leadership team. In addition, elements of the plan are reviewed through various team meetings of teachers. However, the planning is too vaguely expressed in terms of its goals and actions, and too firmly routed in the current performance of the students, to provide the necessary wider and strategic perspective of a whole-school plan.

The school does not yet make full use of student performance data to inform the annual Comprehensive Education Plan, and other linked plans, about the comparative performance of specific student groups, classes and subjects, and to monitor and adapt the school's plans and goals. This hampers the school leadership team in reviewing the progress of the school across all aspects of its work.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Humanities Preparatory School (HS 605)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		X	

<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>			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"> <li>ethnic groups, English Language Learners, special education students*</li> </ul>		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"> <li>all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>			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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>		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.

<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.			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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			X

<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	