



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The New Preparatory Middle School

Middle School 008

**108-35 167th Street
Queens
NY 11433**

Principal: John Murphy

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Reviewer: John Hudson

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The New Preparatory Middle School provides education for about 1,000 students in grades 6 through 8. Approximately 70% of students are Black, 14% Hispanic, 13% Asian and 1% White. English is the main language spoken. Four percent are English language learners and 19% are special education students. At 60%, the proportion of students with Title 1 eligibility is close to City and similar school averages. The average attendance for 2006 – 2007 is 90% which is slightly below City and similar school averages.

The school has undergone substantial change in recent years. Three principals led the school during the 2004 – 2005 academic year. The present administration took over in July 2005. Although designated a grade 6 to 8 middle school, the majority of its students are admitted at grade 7 because many of them come from pre-kindergarten to grade 6 elementary schools.

The school became an Empowerment School in September 2006. Empowerment Schools have 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.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is highly respected by students, staff, parents and the community for his ability and resolve to continuously improve the life-long learning opportunities of his students.
- School leaders and faculty work collaboratively and effectively to set demanding and objectively measurable short- and longer-term goals with plans and timeframes for achieving them.
- Regular interim tests and other assessments are used to track the progress of individual students and groups of students towards interim and longer-term goals.
- The school has developed a robust system for the review, frequent realignment and, where necessary, revision of goals and plans to ensure student performance improves continuously.
- Professional development has enabled many teachers to develop their skills in using data to understand student learning and address their instruction to the needs of individuals.
- School leaders and faculty have very high expectations of themselves and their students and work hard to realize them.
- The school has developed very strong partnerships with many organizations which work collaboratively to raise expectations and provide support to improve student achievement.
- Great emphasis is placed on the quality of care for students and their punctuality and regular attendance at school.
- The school is characterized by a climate of mutual respect and trust.
- The school makes very good use of its financial and human resources to meet the learning needs of students and to raise their achievement.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue the program to improve the assessment tool and data management system to provide up-to-date information for tracking student progress and differentiating instruction and plans to raise achievement of individual students.
- Extend collaboration between school, students and parents to further raise expectations and improve student performance.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

Within a relatively short time and under the leadership of an inspirational principal, the school has aligned instructional activity, resources and student engagement towards high quality learning and continuously improving standards of achievement. The school makes very good use of data to match programs and resources to the identified needs of its students. Through professional development and the careful selection of staff the school is continually improving its capacity for growth and improvement. The school takes particular care over monitoring progress, evaluating achievement and revising its strategies. The school has identified shortcomings in its periodic assessment tool and is working on an improved system for next year.

The school's growing success is based on the principal's very high expectations of what individual students can achieve, given very good instruction, the proper support and encouragement and a climate of care and trust within the school. In this endeavor, the principal is very strongly supported by his assistant principals and all other members of an enthusiastic, appropriately skilled and hard-working staff.

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 captures a very broad range of information from State tests, frequent internal assessments and other sources including attendance and behavior data to measure student performance. School leadership and faculty analyze this data to gain a deep insight into student learning. They track the progress of individual students, classrooms, grade levels, English language and special education learners and other groups of particular interest, including students identified as under achieving. The school also interrogates data to identify individual students whose performance suddenly dips and takes whatever action is required at an early stage. The school takes particular care in comparing its performance with similar schools and with its own past performance. The relative performance of students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subjects, English language learners and special education students is also kept under continuing review to ensure performance is at least satisfactory and action taken if it is not. The relative performance of ethnic groups and boys and girls are tracked less frequently and only in English, mathematics and science. The school is developing its data management systems so that these comparisons can be made in all subject areas at regular intervals throughout the school year. The school plans for its new management system to facilitate the identification of performance across subject areas, classrooms, grade levels, ethnic groups and gender.

The school leadership takes particular care to regularly analyze data to identify trends at an early stage so effective action may be taken immediately. In this way other categories

of interest to the school are identified. For example, the school recently identified a significant group of boys who were under achieving and is planning a pilot scheme to resolve the problem.

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 school has established a clear program to accelerate each student’s learning. The core leadership team analyzes prior performance data, including data from elementary schools, to set demanding objectively measurable school goals each year. Grade level teams set regular interim goals, plans and timeframes so that student progress can be tracked at intervals across the year towards the achievement of school goals. Subject teams set challenging, annual and interim goals and plans to meet grade level and school goals. Individual teachers, working within collaborative teams, effectively track students learning strengths and weaknesses so that lesson plans and their own instruction can be modified as required to enable individual students to achieve to their full potential. Goals and plans are also set and monitored very regularly for groups of students including English language learners, special education students and other groups of interest, including boys.

The principal and his staff have very high expectations of student achievement and set challenging goals with finely tuned plans to achieve them. Parents and caregivers are sent regular information on their children’s performance and have the opportunity of collaborating with the school to enable their children to progress more quickly. While this opportunity is taken by many parents, some others remain less involved. The school is currently creating other ways of engaging this vital sector of the school community. Parents and other partners who are able to be involved with leaders, staff and students, collaborate successfully in a proactive drive towards the highest achievable progress of each individual student. Individual successes are widely celebrated in assemblies and rolls of honor and, where appropriate, suitable rewards are made in the form of educational visits and other stimulating activities.

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.

Leadership and subject teams align the school curriculum with the mandated curriculum and provide regular assessment periods when student achievement data is captured and compared with interim goals in each subject area across all grade levels. Subject teams agree short-term curriculum plans that enable students to achieve interim goals. Student performance is tracked through each assessment period and subject teachers continuously fine tune plans and differentiate instruction to enable individual students to meet set goals. The quality of instruction throughout the school is of a generally high standard and students are actively engaged in their learning. The principal and his leadership team make very good use of frequent classroom observations to monitor lesson plans, differentiation of instruction and student engagement. They use data to track

student progress and hold teachers to account for the achievement of interim and longer-term goals. Where underachievement is identified, action is taken to keep students on target.

The principal and his senior team have made very efficient use of the resources available to the school. They hire a sufficient number of appropriately skilled staff to keep class sizes down and provide support where it is most needed. Suitable and sufficient resources are provided to enable teachers to raise student expectations and improve their academic achievement. The school has, within a year or so, established an excellent library and good technology facilities. Lessons are interesting, well-paced and engage students.

There is a climate of care throughout the school. Staff know students by name and are responsive to their needs. Teachers are pleased to help students after school and at lunch times, if they need it. Students report that they would be confident to confide in their teacher or counselor if necessary. Very good attendance is celebrated and rewarded, as a result of which attendance rates are rising. Absences are checked immediately and appropriate action taken.

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 principal selects staff who share the school's vision of educational excellence. He is looking for staff who are well qualified with a very strong background in their subject area, are very good team players, are willing to work hard to raise student expectations and improve their achievement and have completed an effective demonstration lesson. All staff are trained to retrieve performance data, analyze it and use it to diagnose student learning strengths and weaknesses in their respective subject. They are trained to track performance and use data to fine tune lesson plans. Teachers differentiate their instruction to meet the needs of students and raise their achievement. The school puts much planning and resource into its professional development program. The quality of training is high and teachers use their skills with confidence and to the benefit of students.

The principal and assistant principals set a good example by very regularly visiting classrooms and feeding back to teachers on the quality of their lesson planning and differentiated instruction and the engagement of their students. Teachers visit colleagues' classrooms and there are regular discussions, both informally and at collaborative team meetings, on improving learning and raising achievement. There is a very healthy climate of learning and teachers are enthusiastic about continuously improving their skills to engage their students and raise their achievement.

The inspirational principal is widely respected for his achievement in moving the school forward quickly and for the respect he shows to all in the school community. As a result of his leadership his colleagues and students benefit from a calm, safe, and learning-focused environment. The school runs very smoothly. Planning the school's future development is undertaken with considerable care and attention to detail. The school is magnificently supported by a broad range of dedicated and talented organizations, who work collaboratively with the school leadership and who are all focused on raising student achievement. These services include counseling and other support services on each of the four floors and in each of the three academies within the school. Students enjoy and benefit from after school and Saturday programs.

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 bases all goal and target setting processes on frequently captured and objectively measurable data. Collaborative teams go to great lengths to ensure diagnostic measurements are sufficiently precise to give a clear picture of student learning. Robust systems are in place to evaluate data and diagnose learning strengths and weaknesses. The school has taken considerable care to ensure staff understand and use clear procedures to realign and, where necessary, revise goals and plans to ensure students learn continuously and their performance continues to improve.

Individual teachers track the progress of students within their classrooms and compare progress across their classrooms. In this way, individual students who fall behind are swiftly identified and action taken to remedy the situation. Where necessary other personnel are used to provide intervention programs to support students identified as below target. Collaborative teams take similar steps in comparing the progress of classrooms within grade levels, between grade levels within the school and of grade levels as they progress through the school. Subject teams compare performance in their subject across classrooms and grade levels. The senior team monitors performance throughout the school, and compares the school's progress with time, across subjects and against similar schools. The senior team and other collaborative teams continue to explore ways of improving their use of data to diagnose student performance and accelerate learning as much as possible.

There are well-embedded strategies to fine tune curriculum and lesson plans to the ever changing context of student learning. Similarly, goals are revised where the situation demands that. The annual cycle of review, revision and implementation of goal setting and planning is rigorous, well-embedded within the school community and clearly understood by all. The Comprehensive Education Plan is a significant document, which leads the school forward. Students benefit from a powerful network of teaching, support and encouragement. High expectations for future achievement and success are clearly apparent across the school.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The New Preparatory Middle School (MS 008)	∅	✓	+
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