



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Cypress Hills Collegiate Preparatory

High School 279

94-06 104th Street

Queens

NY 11416

Principal: Alexander Maysonet

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Reviewer: Frank Jones

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Cypress Hills Collegiate Preparatory School opened in 2006 in a purpose built building and shares the site with another small high school. The school is planned to admit one grade each year until it has its full compliment of approximately 300 students. It currently operates with 126 grade 9 students. Of these, 56% are Hispanic, 15% are Black, and 5% are Asian with the remaining students coming from a range of other ethnic groupings. Most students transfer from two junior high schools in the local community. There are currently 15 students identified as English language learners and five special education students. The school receives Title 1 funding. Current attendance figures are above those for similar and City schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is well respected for his leadership both within the school and by the wider community.
- The principal has a clear educational vision for developing the full potential of all students.
- The school places a strong emphasis on reading and writing as a vehicle to improve student performance across the curriculum.
- Teachers and principal display a high degree of support for each other.
- The school has made a good start in the collection and analysis of available data.
- The size of the school promotes a feeling of trust where students feel secure
- The advisory groups provide valuable emotional, social and academic support for students.
- The school has made a good start in developing an appropriate curriculum with scope and sequence to mirror the educational philosophy of the school and to support instruction.

What the school needs to do to improve.

- The understanding and effective use of data by the teachers.
- Instruction throughout the school is not sufficiently differentiated or matched to the learning needs of individual and groups of students.
- There is an insufficient level of student engagement and participation in their learning.
- Ensure adherence to consistent strategies to promote acceptable behavior.
- Introduce a management structure that better supports the needs of the school and its administration.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The school has made a sound start since its inception at the beginning of the academic year 2006-2007. It is now well placed to develop further. The principal has a clear educational philosophy reflected in the style of instruction that meets the personal and learning needs of the whole student. He works hard to support newly hired teachers and enable them to become more confident in their instruction. The quality of available data is high but its use to inform and differentiate instruction lacks consistency across the school.

The school does not yet have its full compliment of students. This constrains the budget and the ability of the principal to hire sufficient staff to address the needs of the school. Consequently, the principal is heavily involved in both the strategic and operational requirements of the school. He rightly recognizes the importance of hiring staff that support his vision and can address those areas where currently there are gaps.

The school is well led and is supported by parents and the wider community. Consequently it has the ability to maintain improvement. The thorough school self-evaluation document highlights the areas for development outlined in this report.

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 has been open less than a year during which time it has made a good start in the collection and analysis of available data. A five-day orientation period takes place before students enter the school. At this time teachers get to know the students, assess samples of student work and, through association with the Sarah Lawrence College, gain a good understanding of student writing abilities. This information and that provided by the record card is supplemented by using a range of additional measures of academic progress. This on-line system provides the school with clear information about what each student knows and can do in English language arts and math. More importantly, it also identifies any skill deficits and the next steps in learning. This information is available following item analysis at the quarterly marking periods. Advisory groups have been initiated and give the opportunity for staff to discuss personal, social and academic issues with their students to enable a complete picture of each student to be built up.

Students have yet to take the Regents test. When they do, the principal recognizes the need to disaggregate the data to identify whether any sub-groups out perform others and if so why. There are fifteen English language learners in the school whose progress is closely monitored and their learning supported within two general education classes. The current budget does not permit the hiring of a teacher for the five special education students but individual education plans are in place and available for teachers to use.

The principal relies heavily on previous experience to develop the educational philosophy of the school. He is also well supported by the Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation (CBO) to implement the shared vision. It is too early in the life of the school to make useful comparisons relating to performance with similar schools. Close contact with principals of other small high schools provides a useful and welcome forum to discuss progress and share best practice.

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.

There is insufficient data available for the school to set reliable long term goals for individual students and subjects. The school sets whole school aspirational goals, such as a 90% pass rate in the Regents test, but as yet does not use the data sufficiently well to be sure this goal is realistic. Goal setting at subject level is similarly undeveloped because staff members do not aggregate data available from marking periods and the student record card.

However the information is used to produce a failure projection, which identifies those students who are underperforming, in order to implement intervention strategies. The use of data to set individual student goals is more developed. Each student has an annual learning goal plan that is updated following each marking period and at discussions with students during their advisory sessions. Valuable emotional, social and academic support for students is provided at this time.

Intervention programs called 'project success' are implemented weekly for students who are in danger of not being promoted. Students are able to access additional support through the Saturday Academy. Criteria are in place to trigger these interventions and the data available from item analysis provide teachers with appropriate information. Programs target instruction through the use of scaffolding and skills ladders to rectify skills deficits. Less clear structures and processes are in place to support students in social studies and science.

Students report that the school has high expectations of them but a few question how realistic these are. Following each marking period, parents receive a written report relating to the progress and achievement of their child. Parent consultation sessions, twice each year, give opportunities to discuss the information available and the high expectations the school has. The principal has a clear educational vision for developing the full potential of all students. This is encapsulated in the educational philosophy the principal has for the future development of the school. The majority of staff support this philosophy, and are keen to make this vision a reality

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 undeveloped.

The school is developing an appropriate curriculum with scope and sequence to mirror the educational philosophy of the school and to support instruction. Teachers are encouraged to supplement the mandated curriculum and attendant standards by designing instruction to match the learning needs of the student population revealed by a skills analysis. The curriculum is expected to develop and be modified in the light of experience and as the students move through the school. The writing workshops, provided by the Sarah Lawrence College, support the strong emphasis the school places on reading and writing in order to improve student performance across the curriculum. The size of the school and number of staff available limit the opportunities for the school to be flexible in its response to situations. However the implementation of 'Drop Everything And Read (DEAR), to deal with low literacy levels, is proven to be a good strategy to support those in most need. Art has been introduced after school by buying in additional instruction.

The principal regularly discusses student achievement with teachers and examines the progress students make in each subject. Teachers' understanding and effective use of data is limited. They make insufficient use of the data available from periodic assessments to differentiate their teaching and match tasks to students' learning needs. Consequently, students are quickly disengaged from learning and their behavior deteriorates, often going unchallenged by the teacher. This situation has an adverse impact on the progress student's make, the standards they achieve and the climate in the school. Staff do not consistently adhere to strategies that promote a positive learning atmosphere within the classroom and other areas of the school.

The principal makes difficult decisions about staffing and schedules to meet the demands of a new school within its budget and he has largely been successful. Class sizes are relatively small and, where possible, he works with other schools to enrich overall provision. The principal and staff work hard to develop a team ethic and display a high degree of support for each other. Relationships with students are generally good and staff take time to understand the needs of individuals and discuss areas of concern with them. Students for their part are positive about the majority of staff and speak highly of the principal who they are confident to go to when they have a problem. The school has an automated system to monitor attendance and parents are aware of, and welcome, the procedures that promote high attendance levels

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 proficient.

The school opened in September with a new principal and eight staff of varying experience in teaching students with a wide range of prior attainment in group situations. The principal has introduced tri-weekly meetings to discuss methodologies and approaches to instruction. He realizes the importance of hiring teachers for the new intake of students that are more skilled in the instructional style required to reflect the learning philosophy of the school. Quite understandably the thrust of professional development has been to focus on those areas key to the successful opening and subsequent development of a new school.

Prior to the start of the school year teachers engaged in a two-week period of professional development focusing on key components that would facilitate the smooth opening of the school. These included: an introduction to DEAR, operating advisory groups, project, and

enquiry-based learning and building a collaborative culture. Success was variable and the school has identified those areas in need of further improvement.

The principal observes the instruction of all staff but primarily those with least experience. Staff members welcome these observations and the subsequent advice and support they receive. Teachers also engage in inter-visitations both within the school and in similar schools and report that this enhances their own practice. A productive initiative has been the 'critical friends' group, which is seen as a professional collaborative community that analyzes teachers' plans and acts as a forum to discuss how to adapt the lessons to address the needs of all students.

The Principal is well respected for his leadership both within the school and by the wider community. He already demonstrates the capacity to implement change and he understands that he will need to sustain this. He has implemented practices and processes that enable the school to run smoothly on a day-to-day basis. He works well with the wider community to involve them in the development of the school, including work placements to enrich student experiences.

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 initial goal for the school was to open and develop as a successful educational institution and, in this respect it has made an encouraging start. The principal is developing the Comprehensive Education Plan through discussion with teachers revolving round his own personal performance review. He adopts a wide consultative approach to ensure comprehensive representation in the goal setting process. This includes: the results of student and teacher surveys, feedback from parent association meetings and the views of the senior leadership team. He considers that this approach will encourage broad ownership of corporate goals and recognizes the importance of making them measurable and time related.

The principal schedules annual individual meetings with all staff to discuss their goals, personal objectives and mastery targets for the following year. Support is available to make these achievable and they will be used to hold teachers accountable for their performance. The school has begun to look critically at the success it has achieved to date and key issues for the future CEP. The need to specify measurable departmental goals that will include further development of the curriculum and clearly establish achievement data, has been identified and will become easier to implement with additional staff.

The high quality data for establishing student goals in English language arts and math is not yet replicated in other subjects. Student assessment data enables teachers to realign the curriculum to meet individual student needs but the use of this information to inform instruction is inconsistent across the school.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Cypress Hills Collegiate Preparatory (HS 279)	∅	✓	+
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	