



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice**

**High School 685  
186 North 6 Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11211**

**Principal: Hector Calderon**

**Dates of review: May 14 - 15, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Francesca Peña**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice is a high school with 174 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 15% Black, 83% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 41% of the students enrolled and girls account for 59%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 76.4%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 67% eligibility.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal has a clear vision, which is shared with the whole school community.
- Students most in need of improvement are clearly identified, well targeted, and monitored effectively.
- Parents value the unique family atmosphere and the support that they receive from the school.
- Regular assessments are used very well to inform key areas of strategic development and make timely adjustment to procedures.
- The work of the school is closely aligned to its foundation as a community-based organization, reflecting the goals and aspirations of that community.
- The curriculum is innovative and demanding and provides the students with many opportunities to reach proficiency.
- The school actively promotes a positive learning environment that fosters personal, social and academic development.
- Data and information from classroom observations are used well to inform good quality professional development.
- The school has developed an effective system of data collection, which gives the staff a constant updated picture of every student.
- The school has a stable staff that challenges the students through interdisciplinary studies and hands on projects.

### What the school needs to improve

- Develop additional systems that involve parents more actively in raising the level of attendance and reducing lateness.
- Develop a more detailed system to analyze and evaluate the progress and achievement of English Language Learners and special education students.
- Provide professional development for staff to make better use of class level data to improve even further and assist planning for differentiated instruction.

## Part 3: Main Findings

### Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

### Overall Evaluation

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

El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice is guided by four principles that serve as the foundation for all administrative, academic, programmatic and institutional developments. These are: creating community, love and caring, mastery, and peace and justice. The staff is fully committed to connecting students in mentoring relationships that foster student achievement and their passions. This commitment is manifested by creating interdisciplinary lessons, units and projects that are geared towards dealing with issues of human rights and community development.

The principal provides very good leadership and inspires students and staff by his caring attitude and high expectations of success. As a result, the school has a friendly, family atmosphere that is built on mutual respect and trust. Parents, staff and students unanimously compared the school to a big family where there is, “plenty of love and support for all.” The school uses a systematic approach of gathering data and using that data as feedback of student performance as well as teacher practices. The work of the academic support services has been particularly successful in meeting the needs of the special education students and other groups of lower-achieving students. As a result, these students make good progress. Even so, the school does not sufficiently analyze assessments and performance for these students or English language learners.

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report especially in the alignment of grade level curriculum. Many of the professional development sessions have been dedicated to this area. As a result, most teachers maintain the challenge and pace in all their lessons.

The work of the school is closely aligned to its foundation as a community-based organization, reflecting the goals and aspirations of that community. El Puente community-based organization offers a wide range of activities to enhance and enrich learning including the arts, music and drama, sports teams and tutoring. A team is working very diligently to raise the school’s attendance but it remains a concern.

The inquiry team is doing an extraordinary job with its target population that includes 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade males with individual education plans. They have developed strategies for teaching this target group that has improved the students’ performance and has the potential to impact positively on the teaching and learning of comprehension skills throughout the school.

## **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 the student's progress over time.**

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

In order to meet the school's mission of inspiring and nurturing student leadership for peace and justice, the school provides efficient systems for tracking student academic mastery through periodic assessments of student learning and progress. The school's rationale for designing periodic assessments is underpinned by key questions which focus on what students know and need to do in order to reach proficiency at each grade level and across all subject areas. The school's effective multi-tier and self-directed improvement process entwines 'Design Your Own' periodic assessments, including subject-based assessments linked to teachers' assessments.

The school's self-directed improvement system consists of a baseline assessment of all students when they enter the school using a methodology, developed by the Efficacy Institute, to move all students to proficiency. Proficiency or mastery is identified by solid academic performance in all areas assessed. Students reaching proficiency or mastery have demonstrated competence in subject matter knowledge as well as application of subject matter to real-world or novel situations. All teachers are required to write school developed mastery targets for their courses. These mastery targets are shared with students and their parents during parent teacher conferences and curriculum nights.

The school effectively manages a formal cycle of assessment every nine months. Data is disaggregated by subgroups such as gender, ethnicity and across subjects. However, the data disaggregation and analysis of English language learners and special education students is not as rigorous as it is for other students. It is evident through the student performance results that the assessments and systems established are moving a majority of students toward proficiency levels across all subjects.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.**

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

After each marking period, the school presents data to teachers, students and their parents as a platform for reflection on ways to improve teaching and learning. Teachers review data, reflecting on the root causes of low student achievement and implement new strategies, align curriculum and design support services to meet the needs of lower-performing students. Students review data, reflect on why their performance is low, and set goals together with teachers for the next marking period. Advisors and mentors work with students to design individualized and small group academic intervention programs. Parents review new goals so they can monitor their child's progress and encourage them to attend after school and Saturday classes.

The school has identified some groups of students whose performance is a concern, such as those who are off-track to graduation, those with higher rates of absenteeism or behavioral infractions and those at risk of dropping out. Interventions and supports are provided through counseling and through their advisory classes. The students are given

multiple opportunities to recover credits. They can complete the work under the supervision of a teacher, they can buy back credit by earning an 80% or above in the following semester or by attending credit recovery classes after school. The school has developed an individual learning plan for every student that addresses interventions tailored to specific academic and social needs.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.**

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

There are several working committees that meet regularly to review data and design strategies for supporting student achievement. These committees include: a cabinet; an academy leadership cycle that uses data to develop institutional and academic structures; an interdisciplinary standards committee that oversees the alignment of curriculum; another that focuses on the individual holistic needs of the students and the development of groups, individual and family support processes and services implemented in both day and evening programs. All committee reports are forward to the principal and included in long and short term planning. Other needs assessments are informed by reports generated internally to track the academic performance of each teacher, grade and subject area; individual progress reports prepared by teachers; students’ portfolios and journals; classroom performances; and teachers’ observations and weekly attendance reports that record individual lateness and absences. The curriculum is well developed and aligned to match the mastery targets created by every teacher. In addition, there is a wide range of additional courses and projects designed to meet student needs and interest. Ensure that higher performing students are fully challenged and engaged in learning. Teachers plan differentiated tasks very effectively and there are clear examples of interdisciplinary planning. The faculty skillfully analyzes diagnostic, summative and formative assessments to determine individualized programs. Students receive comprehensive narrative reports based on the cycle of assessments in each subject area that clearly explain their academic performance and progress. From direct observation, the quality of teaching is good. The teachers plan their lessons well and, because they establish such good relationship with the students, the atmosphere is relaxed and purposeful.

Attendance is given a high priority since the school had to relocate two times last year due to unsafe locations. The principal attributes the drop in attendance to these moves. The team is working very diligently to raise the school’s attendance and anticipates a steadier increase once the school moves into its permanent building in the fall of next academic year.

**Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

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

There is a review process that supports, yet challenges, teachers to maintain high expectations of their students. The “3-6-9” cycles of assessments also applies to the schools’ professional development structure. Every three weeks, the principal meets with

the staff to go over their progress and set goals. Every six weeks, a series of informal and a formal observation are conducted. Every nine weeks, the principal assesses the progress made toward the established goals. As a support to teachers in meeting their goals, every Wednesday is dedicated to professional development. Professional development emerges from the conversations and observations that the academy leadership cycles have had with other facilitators. This professional development series serves to improve the quality of goal setting by identifying specific scaffolding skills, application and understanding. In light of the focused use of these sessions, the school has made significant improvement in instructional practice and student achievement. This is exemplified in the teachers' improved instructional strategies that are consistently targeted against student performance and identified needs from data analyzed. Resources are efficiently allocated to address the needs of students and to develop the curriculum, such as in the deployment of staff for counseling, providing intervention for underperforming students, and maintaining small class sizes. The school actively promotes personal, social and academic development. As a school that was born out of a community-based organization (El Puente), it has built strong partnerships with other organizations to enable students to receive a wealth of guidance to support them in their learning, as well as many opportunities to participate in community projects to expand their social horizons.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

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

The school leader's rigor in monitoring and evaluating the school's process through mastery targets, lesson observations, scrutiny of student work and inquiry meetings contributes to validating assessments. As part of the Self-Directed Improvement System process, the school evaluates every semester how well they are progressing toward their yearly goals. At the end of every semester, teachers and administrative staff come together to evaluate course passing rates, Regents and portfolios passing rates, and progress and narrative reports to get a comprehensive picture of how the school is progressing towards the goals. The question of "why" is always raised in discussions among the staff to challenge their thinking, assessment designs, and plan towards improvement.

The Self-Directed Improvement System Process has helped the school understand the factors that influence student achievement by providing feedback about student performance. As a result of this implementation, the school has shape to its curriculum and more students are reaching proficiency. The school has committees that are accountable for overseeing the alignment of curriculum to Regents examinations and students' portfolio assessments. Every subject department is represented on this committee which effectively reviews and revises pacing guides, links cross curriculum strands, and ensures that each discipline is implemented by aligning instruction to the curriculum standards.

The school is well placed now to refine its analysis of cohort performance in order to support the identification of additional improvement strategies for particular groups of students.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice</b>	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>				X	

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

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?			X		
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?			X		
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?				X	
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?				X	
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				X	

### Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?				X	
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?				X	
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>				X	

### Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?			X		
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?			X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				X	

**Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?				X	
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?			X		
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>					X

**Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?				X	
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?				X	
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?					X
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?					X
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?					X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>					X

◇	<b>Outstanding</b>
+	<b>Well Developed</b>
✓	<b>Proficient</b>
➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>