



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Lower East Side Preparatory High School

High School 515

**145 Stanton Street
New York
NY 10002**

Principal: Martha Polin

Dates of review: May 5 – 6, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Peter Williman

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Lower East Side Preparatory School is a high school with 559 students from grade 10 through grade 12. The school population comprises 3% Black, 3% Hispanic, 1% White, and 93% Asian students. The student body includes 93% English language learners and 4% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 91.8%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 77% eligibility.

The Lower East Side Preparatory School is an alternative transfer school. A large majority, 93%, of students have entered directly from China with no English language proficiency. Seven percent of students have transferred from other schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides clear vision and very positive leadership to the school.
- Students are very aware of their personal goals and the next steps in their learning.
- English language learners make very good progress and achieve well, as a result of a focused curriculum, exceptional support and effective instruction.
- The administration reviews a good range of school data very effectively to support student progress.
- Students are very well motivated, engage well in their learning, benefiting from a well balanced and interesting curriculum.
- The school's Collaborative Laboratory for professional development represents a remarkably innovative medium for instructional and learning development.
- The school has high expectations for all students and communicates these clearly to parents.
- The work of the inquiry team is well focused, carefully researched and offers models to further the interpretation and use of school data.
- The collegial relationships between administration, coaches and faculty benefit school development and student progress and achievement.
- Attendance is very effectively monitored and positively promoted.

What the school needs to improve

- Examine student performance data in greater depth at classroom and school level to identify more precise goals and instructional targets.
- Further develop teachers' confidence and understanding to identify and analyze data to inform instruction.
- Consolidate and extend the best practices of differentiated instruction to reflect student learning styles, vary levels of challenge and modes of engagement.
- Develop and document measurable interim and final school goals, within clear schedules for monitoring and evaluation.

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.

The Lower East Side Preparatory High School is an alternative high school with unusual composition and challenges. The school is highly focused and very successful in its core mission to graduate students at the highest levels. Students who are generally over grade age and have mostly missed grade 9, make good progress. Chinese students achieve very well in their native language. To the school's credit, they achieve relatively well in their second language through English Regents exams. Subjects requiring an American cultural knowledge are more challenging to them. This good achievement results from the school's effective leadership, a motivating environment and dedicated instruction. The principal has clear vision and gives positive direction to the school. Members of the administrative team have complementary skills and carry out their roles effectively. Teachers and counselors ensure students know their goals and give very good support, both socially and academically. Instruction is strengthened by well-differentiated and strategically managed professional development through the work of the administration and coaches. The pinnacle of this opportunity is reflected in the innovative Collaboration Laboratory. Teachers, students and school leaders share and experiment with instructional ideas to promote school goals. Strategic planning for professional development is not well documented.

Good progress has been made since the last Quality Review. Information gathered from student reflections and from returning alumni inform curriculum and instructional decisions. There is now a greater fusion of English across the content areas. The administration has a high profile around the school and analyzes a good range of student and school data more carefully to guide planning for school improvement. Measurable school goals are set for achievement, but these are insufficiently refined and documented for systematic review. This is a problematic exercise because of unpredictable student enrollment and a transient, diverse student population. However, all students have very clearly defined and challenging personal goals. Teachers use data well to inform their scholarship reports and to set priorities for instruction. Not all teachers are at the same level of confidence and skill. Professional development and the work of the inquiry team are promoting the use of data analysis to take it to the next level. The inquiry team has used extremely good research approaches to identify specific deficits in students' English skills. Innovative remedial listening and response activities, using iPod technology, are under trial. Importantly, the work of the team offers a very good model for teachers to follow to interrogate data more rigorously to improve practices. Departmental teams are more focused as a result of teachers' collaborative discussions of data. More teachers are exploring techniques to differentiate instruction and engage students. While there are some very good practices and professional development is supportive, this is a work in progress.

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.

The administration collects and analyzes a wide range of data from school, City and State assessments, in a manner relevant to the unique context of the school. Student entry data is correlated longitudinally to in-school progress. This data is aggregated very effectively to enable year-on-year comparisons of student achievement. There are clear protocols for the regular scholarship reports. This gives structure to assessment and enhances the validity of judgments. These reports, together with Regents' results, are very aptly and carefully scrutinized for progress and consistency in departments and classes. Reflections from returning alumni give a further perspective. The school schedules classes in response to information of student achievements and therefore monitoring can be more accurate. Mixed-grade classrooms and the individuality of students' situations make traditional analysis by grade level unproductive. Teachers generally maintain good records to create the scholarship reports. The use of rubrics to link day-to-day assessments to state standards is widespread. Teachers do analyze student outcomes but this is an aspect for greater consistency and refinement. Students know their own levels of achievement well. They contribute to self-evaluation through checklists of levels of skills and knowledge. Guidance counselors meet with students on a frequent and regular basis to monitor progress. This sharing is, in turn, highly motivational. The school monitors the progress of English language learners exceptionally well from their point of entry through reviews of their transcripts. Leaders closely track their way toward competence in English through successive leveled classes. This group is a priority and their success is a tribute to the school's understandings of their needs. The inquiry team is providing a springboard to further increase the quality of analysis of achievement. The school maintains a special overview of the 15% population of students with interrupted formal education (SIFE). The individuality of review of student progress assists these students and equally ensures that the progress of the minority group of American transfer students is very carefully monitored. These students also make good progress. Although special education students cannot be formally referred, close counseling and regular review ensures that they receive the requisite support.

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.

The school currently sets goals that are very relevant to the urgency of its task to accelerate learning for students to achieve graduation. This is especially significant as all students in the school are over grade age and under credited and, therefore, in the category of greatest need. Faculty, students and administration share the commitment to improvement and graduation. Parents and caregivers are very pleased with their children's progress, and their views are valued. They are kept suitably informed. Every student knows their current level of performance and what they need to achieve, semester by semester, to graduate. This results from the good communication systems

and the concerted work of teachers and counselors. Teachers generally use their records and conferences with students well to identify deficits and next steps in learning. However, while goal setting is very effective in promoting high expectations, student motivation and success, there is insufficient collection of data to take goal setting to the next level of precision. As a result, the school continually addresses 'what' students do not know, but not always specifically 'why' they have the particular individual difficulty. The inquiry team's work is addressing this kind of issue. At the whole school level, the administration monitors progress towards school goals closely, but does not analyze data sufficiently. Sub-goals for incremental improvement, timeframes and sharp success criteria for classes and subjects are sometimes lacking.

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.

The administration has high expectations for the use of assessment to modify curriculum plans, ensuring effective learning. Teachers are held closely accountable for achievement through the regular and frequent scrutiny of assessments. The principal and assistant principals maintain an overview of teachers' strategies for student progress. This is in line with the improvement point identified in the last Quality Review. There is also an opportunity to judge the impact of the strategies demonstrated in the Collaborative Laboratory. As a result, the curriculum generally is very well presented through authentic situations and tasks that enable students to understand and adjust to the American way of life. Many lessons comprise a good range of visual, listening, speaking and collaborative opportunities to engage students and enable them to use their learning strengths. Teachers help students in their responses through good use of graphic organizers, rubrics, the use of technology and well-devised worksheets. The very supportive environment of mutual trust and respect strengthens the impact of lessons and students' growing maturity. While lessons engage students well, teachers do not always differentiate tasks and modes of assessment to meet the variable levels of student understanding. Students sometimes work above or below an appropriate level of challenge. Budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions support the school's assessed priorities to accelerate students' learning well. Double lessons and smaller classes, focused on student skill levels, assist English language learners. The integration of the schedule of instruction and programs to support learning and credit deficits within and beyond the school day is very effective. The good range of recreational activity, the regular visits to Camp Mason and links to artistic organizations further motivate students. The strengthened counseling team is critical to students' social and emotional support. Additionally they reinforce the very good work of the attendance team and this has driven attendance up to 91.8%, higher than City high school average.

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.

The introduction of the very innovative 'Collaboration Laboratory' symbolizes the high commitment of the school to professional development. This underpins both school

priorities and individual teacher's needs. Through the medium of the "Collab", the whole faculty observes and engages in a lesson with a class of students. The sessions are scheduled, of apt length, and now systemic in the work of the school. As a result, good practice is shared in authentic situations. Methodologies are demonstrated and evaluated. Teachers are exposed to new ideas. Students experience the cutting edge of the school's instruction. Teachers gain experience as instructional leaders and are reminded of what it is to be a learner. The activity has strengthened relationships and collaboration across the school. Rigorous end of session evaluations give valuable feedback data to administration and teachers to support implementation and to suggest further applications and refinements. Lessons demonstrate that this strategy is impacting significantly on lesson plans and instruction throughout the school. Observations and walkthroughs by the administration and coaches effectively identify individual needs and subject issues. The principal, as a result, is encouraging the fusion of English skills in teaching across the curriculum. She notes teachers from other cultures of pedagogy who require help in integrating into the school. This is part of the good support given to teachers new to the school and profession.

The detailed support of counselors, the smooth flow of well ordered days and the well chosen partnerships contribute significantly to the students very good academic progress. Students value the fact that they can learn in a secure environment. They receive very good help and advice to make college choices. Data demonstrates the benefits of the community-based organizations.

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 proficient.

The school approaches the promotion of student achievement and progress strategically. All students have clear interim achievement targets that if met, will enable graduation or diploma qualification. These are scheduled across the semesters and reviewed systematically. Teachers individually and in departments evaluate the effectiveness of their instruction against student benchmarks and adjust their planning. An English teacher recounted changing her instructional plans twice to ensure Chinese students understood the use of conjunctions. The administration is flexible and responsive to significant issues arising from reviews of whole school data. Following a review of Regents data, they have identified the greater integration of English skills across the curriculum as strategic direction for change. The findings of the inquiry team also support this analysis. The school plans to develop teacher outcomes have progressed well by the anecdotal evidence of the Quality Review. Leaders do not currently evaluate or document the improvement teachers make, as shown through measures of student achievement. Consequently, monitoring and objective evaluation of the pace of change and its effect on learning is limited. The administration has a clear understanding of how far the school has progressed in the development of its plans and their next steps to maintain growth and continuity. The faculty's culture of collaborative work and the readiness to innovate is supportive of this growth.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SCHOOL NAME: The Lower East Side Preparatory High School | Δ | ▷ | ✓ | + | ◇ |
| Quality Score | | | | 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 | | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 1 | | | | 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 | | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 2 | | | | 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 | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 3 | | | | 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 | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 4 | | | | | 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 | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 5 | | | | | X |

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|---|--|
| ◇ | Outstanding |
| + | Well Developed |
| ✓ | Proficient |
| ➤ | Underdeveloped with Proficient Features |
| Δ | Underdeveloped |