



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Humanities Preparatory Academy

High School 605

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

Principal: Barnaby Spring

Dates of review: April 17 - 18, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Vic Chaffey

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Humanities Preparatory Academy is a high school with 174 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 32% Black, 51% Hispanic, 10% White, and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 40% of the students enrolled and girls account for 60%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 81.0%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 50% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Strong relationships between school and home contribute significantly to students' progress and achievement.
- The school's use of differentiated approaches to learning ensures that students make very good progress.
- Comprehensive use of assessment and monitoring procedures make sure the school knows how well students are progressing.
- The school is very successful in addressing the diverse needs of those students who require extra support to make good progress.
- Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good.
- The school offers a high level of help and support to all students through its advisory program.
- Good relationships between staff and students support a climate of mutual trust which gives students confidence to raise issues and express their opinions.
- The school uses data very effectively to inform the progress and achievement of students, classes, grades and groups.
- Targeted professional development, based on the needs of the school and individual staff, has improved teaching performance and classroom practice.
- Well-developed partnerships do an excellent job of supporting the school's curriculum.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine procedures and practices for transfer students joining the school to set academic goals that more accurately address their needs.
- Refine existing procedures for lesson observation to support the development of good practice.
- Undertake the implementation of individualized learning plans to support the setting of individual student's targets and goals
- Explore ways of reconciling the administration and staff's wish to be egalitarian in its decision making process with the need for a clear next stages of planning to move the school forward.
- Develop student ownership of personal targets and goals via reflective self-assessments so that they can identify strengths, weaknesses and next steps for improvement.

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.

In a speech last year, the principal said the school was “nothing more or less than a rigorous intellectual community conversation on what works best for life long learning, happiness and freedom in a democratic society.” The school’s strengths lie in conversation, community and democracy, which are used together to lay the foundations for a program of individualized education that effectively supports the learning and progress of all students. While this democratic process meets the needs of students, at times it hinders school development because by trying to be considerate and take account of everyone’s views, the school does not always move forward as effectively as it might.

The school’s population is made up of three distinct groups: transfer students with social and emotional needs, those who are “over age and under credited,” and articulated 9th graders. In consequence, the school notes that “from the moment a student arrives in our school the professional community engages in a conversation around the needs of this student that are illuminated by the various lenses we apply in looking at each student. This makes it possible for our community to be engaged in an ongoing process of identifying, predicting, deciding and executing a number of actions around a student’s formal and informal educational needs that are timely and accurate.”

The needs of each student are effectively met through the good use of differentiated approaches to learning, a thorough use of assessment and monitoring procedures and a comprehensive program of guidance and support. However, the school is aware that it needs to strengthen some of its goal setting procedures and has plans in place to do so. Professional development is used well to support the competence of all staff, although staff would like the opportunity to be observed more often in the classroom. The school has successfully addressed all the areas for improvement from the last Quality Review. The inquiry team has commenced work to improve literacy skills of reluctant readers. It is too early to judge the impact of this program.

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.

A large portion the school's population is made up of students, who are over age and under credited or have dropped out of high school. Many have social and emotional

needs. Each one of these students presents the school with unique challenges. In order to address their diverse needs, the school requires detailed knowledge and understanding of students' performance and progress. Information about each student is gathered through assessment of prior achievement, an in-depth interview and a day in school following an agreed schedule. Students who enter the school in grade 9 also have their prior performance assessed. These processes ensure the school has a clear understanding of students' performance upon entry.

Students' progress is monitored routinely and regularly throughout their school careers. The school has a waiver from the City Department of Education to use performance-based assessments instead of Regents examinations. These assessments are the cornerstone of the school's system of data analysis.

The school's data specialist tabulates the information gathered and analyzes it thoroughly to ensure that the school has a very good understanding of the progress of individuals, classes, grades and groups. The resulting information is regularly shared in a format that is understandable for all staff regardless of their varying levels of computer literacy. The school has a particularly good understanding of the progress of its subgroups, for instance a girls' advisory group has been set up to better address their needs.

This manipulation of data does not provide a complete assessment of the often complex social and emotional needs of many students. These needs are addressed in part by the school's comprehensive advisory procedures where advisors meet with students four times a week. Teachers gather a great deal of knowledge about their advisees. As one parent noted, at parent teacher meetings he meets with a teacher who has a thorough all-around knowledge of his son.

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.

Goals are widely set in the school concerning many aspects of school life. The principal shares his goals with the staff, and every student has individual, personal goals. The "strategic planning tool" drawn up at the beginning of the year sets out the school's goals for the year, complete with objectives and review time frames. The school uses both staff retreats and staff meetings to establish and monitor progress toward these goals.

Most goals are well set, rigorous and measurable. However, in some areas the system requires strengthening. For instance, the goal for transfer students to make a 10% improvement in credit accumulation is a blanket goal which fails to take account of students' prior performance or levels of need. Students' personal goals are well targeted, reached after discussion with their teachers and based on achievement. These goals often set out what has to be done to make improvement in a particular area of study. However, at present students are not encouraged to reflect on their own academic strengths and weaknesses and find it difficult to set their own targets and personal goals. The school has plans to introduce "Individualized Learning Plans" to address this issue.

The school has a large number of students whose needs are many and various, all of which are very well addressed. The use of past and present data ensures that progress is monitored, while the advisory program assists social development. The flexibility of each student's curriculum and the use of restorative justice all play their part in ensuring the school can support the needs of all students. Close interaction between staff and students provides detailed information on student performance and progress which is communicated to parents in a variety of ways, including progress reports and parent teacher conferences. More innovatively, a weekly bulletin is produced and distributed to all staff and parents, who are also encouraged to make contact with the school by email. Parents think highly of the two-way communication between them and the school. As one parent remarked, the staff "are more than accessible, they reach out."

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.

Relationships between staff and students are outstanding. As one student noted, "There is respect for everybody, the teachers are our friends, there is no separation, it's just a community family type of school." The school provides a broad but individually targeted curriculum to meet the needs of students. Its success results not only from the individualized nature of the programs offered but also from the innovative ways it addresses challenges. For instance the school has no gymnasium, so in order to provide the required high level of credit recovery in physical education it has developed yoga and walking programs. The walking program not only improves fitness but also develops students' knowledge and appreciation of the city in which they live.

Differentiated approaches to learning are highly developed and employed throughout the school. The practice is seen in individualized programs of study, in practical science lessons and in the design projects undertaken in art. Indeed, one of the watches designed last year is now on sale in Macy's. One parent illustrated the depth of differentiation used to ensure students learn, stating that her son has an individual education plan to address his literacy needs and explaining that his teacher took his love of video games to stimulate an understanding of a required reading text which resulted in a five page essay. Realizing that often many of the students had a troubled school attendance record in the past, the school works very hard to ensure they attend every day. High levels of attendance are ensured through phone calls made on the first day of absence, an attendance committee that meets once a week, and home visits and teacher family conferences.

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.

Professional development is one of the strengths of the school. The school year always starts with an orientation week, professional development issues are an integral part of staff meetings and staff form "critical friends" groups to review developmental ideas.

Lesson observations are undertaken in the school and written feedback is provided on these activities. Staff would like more frequent observation to further improve professional competency and ensure their progress in the classroom is founded on good practice. A comprehensive induction process supports staff new to the school.

The advice and guidance system supports the progress and development of all students. The school community focuses on a set of core values: peace, diversity, humanity, justice, intellect and truth. These values are designed to “do things they need to do for a community committed to social justice.” The school emphasizes notions of restorative justice in dealing with its students. The fairness committee arbitrates issues between students and even between staff and students, successfully reducing any minor points of conflict and increasing general harmony.

The school’s partnerships are very good. A relationship with Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound supports staff professional development while other links with Healthcorps and Hunter College contribute to teaching programs and curricular development in mathematics and science. The school has plans for an international travel and community service program which would include internships at Yale University, and for an arts-based exchange program with China.

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 uses interim and final test results and regular diagnostic measures of students’ progress to monitor and revise plans for their classes and grades throughout the year. The school’s strategic planning tool has allowed it to more clearly articulate short and long-term goals. Regular interim assessments inform planning throughout the school and allow teachers to further differentiate their teaching to meet the needs of all students.

The school bases its decision-making processes on consensus and democracy, allowing all teachers to share equally in the development and implementation of new policies and practices. This system has many strengths and contributes to the progress the school is making. However, at present, the model can inhibit progress because both the administration’s and teachers’ concern to be fair and democratic reduces the school’s ability to be able to move quickly to the next stage of planning.

The school expresses its mission in part as “to provide a haven for students who have previously experienced school as unresponsive to their needs as individuals....We aid students in this...by humanizing the school environment and by creating a talking culture.” The success of the school today lies in the delivery of this mission for the benefit of all students.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Humanities Preparatory Academy	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	

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