



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Pathways College Preparatory School

Middle and High School 259

109-89 204 Street

Queens

NY 11412

Principal: Michele Shannon

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Lead Reviewer: Cheryl Baker

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Pathways College Preparatory School is a middle and high school with 462 students from grade 6 through grade 11. The school population comprises 89% Black, 8.5% Hispanic, 0.5% White and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 0.1% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 92.5%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

The school is in its third year of development under the founding principal and has added grades and classes each year as it grows to full capacity in the fall of 2009. The school shares a campus with another middle school, which presents challenges with respect to space allocations, student relationships and class size.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's mission and vision are very tightly aligned with its partner and are reflected in planning and goal setting throughout the school.
- School goals and core values are broadly communicated and underpin decisions for the school's continued expansion and academic progress.
- High expectations for student achievement are inherent in the approach the school has taken and are supported by a strong college preparatory program.
- Highly effective and regular professional development is increasing teachers' instructional repertoires and providing good support for, especially, new teachers.
- Teachers receive informative feedback on their instruction through observation, coaching, supervision and evaluation by administrators and peers.
- Relations among and between administration and staff are highly collaborative and well focused on improving teaching and learning.
- Parents are very supportive of the school, receive good progress updates and, increasingly, are enlisted in collaborative goal setting for their children.
- The effective advisory system supports students in their overall development.
- Students are making progress and the achievement gap is closing.
- The principal makes good use of comparisons with similar schools.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve good school-wide planning further by developing specific timelines with measurable targets to increase the effectiveness of school plans.
- Implement goal setting by teachers to define their targets for instructional improvements and extend student goal setting to include academic targets.
- Continue to provide rigorous training and support in the understanding and use of data for the differentiation of instruction to meet individual student's needs.
- Develop cross-grade planning practices to support consistent standards-based curriculum development throughout the grade 6-12 continuum.
- Continue efforts to increase high school attendance and decrease tardiness.
- Continue to explore all possible solutions to the persistently disruptive behavior of some students.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

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

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Year-on-year, Pathways College Preparatory School is growing towards realizing its overarching goal of higher education for all of its graduates and it is well supported in this by its partner, The College Board. The mutually shared vision and mission is evident in all aspects of the school and continues to guide its development effectively. Students and parents are appreciative of the preparation students are receiving for their future learning. The school uses data effectively to understand student progress and to monitor and revise practices and planning at the school, grade, class, subject area and student level. Planning is generally good and plans are widely shared. However, their effectiveness is hindered, somewhat, by the lack of specific timelines by which to measure incremental progress. Although students engage in goal setting, this does not include academic targets. Likewise, teachers, which the school supports well in developing their instruction skills, have not set personal goals for their professional improvement and their students' achievements.

Very good care is taken to support students through an effective advisory system and this enhances parents' engagement in their child's education. Teachers benefit from multiple sources of support and very fine and frequent professional development. The curriculum is increasingly aligned to standards and is appropriately rigorous, though not tightly aligned across the grades. Instruction is generally effective and engaging, though lacks differentiation at the level of the individual student. Good management procedures and programs are in place for attendance and student discipline; however, these areas remain a challenge for the school.

The inquiry team is making adequate progress towards defining effective interventions for their target group and exploring extensions to the population at large. Progress on suggestions from the previous review includes the acquisition of an on-line grade book and increased visitations among classrooms.

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 proficient.

The school uses the available State and City assessment data, as well as that generated by its in-house assessments, to provide regular updates to information about the progress of students, classrooms and grade levels leading for effective overall progress monitoring. The addition of an on-line grading system has enhanced teachers', parents' and administrators' capacity to gain fine-grained data on student performance and the school

is making strides in training teachers to use this data to better track progress. In addition training in the use of diagnostic assessments is supporting teachers' capacity for data driven planning. The progress of special education students is monitored in inclusive classroom settings revealing progress in line with, approximately, that of the lower third of general education students. The school is effective in measuring the progress of its few English language learners in a highly individualized way. Analysis of the progress of ethnic groups by the administrative team reveals little disparity among groups. In fact, the school has made progress in closing the achievement gap for Black students.

As the school grows year-on-year, very focused analysis of credit accrual, Regents' pass rates and cohort performance informs administrators and teachers of the effectiveness of instruction, program placement and curricular effectiveness. This informs decisions for the next year's growth planning. With respect the comparisons with similar schools, the school has moved beyond the peer horizon data provided by the City and looks deeply at its progress compared to other College Board Schools with similar values and missions. Pathways compares favorably in this respect. The principal also takes good advantage of network opportunities to engage with colleagues in a "critical friends" group to compare best practices in increasing student achievement.

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 proficient.

There is a culture of strong collaboration that is evident in the development of school-wide plans. These documents strongly reflect the mission and vision of the school, developed by the principal and its partner agency The College Board and are shared widely and publicly through multiple publications and postings. The plans effectively drive decisions regarding annual expansion of the school and improvements to learning but lack specific timelines for reaching annual goals. High expectations for rigorous instruction and excellent student achievement are inherent in the overt focus on preparation for college that permeates planning and actions of leaders and teachers. This is true for the grades, classrooms and subjects. This extends to students, especially those identified as an area of concern, such as middle school students performing below Level 3 on State tests, special education students and English language learners. For these, specific plans, achievement monitoring and intervention services are carefully designed to support their continued growth, academically as well as socially. Most are making sufficient progress.

Each teacher has an assigned group of students that they monitor daily, and meet with weekly in the capacity of an advisor and guide for social, emotional personal and academic improvements that effectively supports learning. Advisors also build effective relationships with families to provide frequent communication about progress and to engage in student goal setting. At present, the focus of goal setting is personal rather than academic targets. Parents are supportive of this effective and personalized context for a home and school partnership for supporting learning that is moving beyond the usual sources of information about student progress such as report cards, curriculum nights and conferences. As well, parent and student access to the on-line grading system is increasing real-time monitoring of student progress.

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 proficient.

The school's academic curriculum is appropriately rigorous and is in line with its explicit expectations for college preparedness. It has undergone revision when misalignment with State standards was uncovered after analysis of student performance data. Individual teachers develop yearly plans and, as the school grows and develops, standardization of these documents has increased. As well, the introduction of the effective school-wide electronic grading system is providing meaningful interim data about student achievement. As the school has grown its capacity to provide good extensions to learning during the regular day and after school, especially for the middle school, has increased. Students and parent appreciate this and hope for more. In addition to well-received physical education opportunities, students receive instruction in arts and foreign languages across the school. Overall, the administrative team effectively uses achievement and other pertinent data in planning for staffing increases, scheduling and strategic budget expenditures, especially as the school is still developing.

A very explicit and effective faculty handbook sets forth detailed expectations for lesson and unit development that communicate clear expectations for engaging, inclusive and interesting instruction. Teachers are held accountable for such and are clear in their understanding that resulting student achievement is an overt expectation of the principal. Overall, instruction is well planned and provides students with opportunities for active learning. Teachers are developing their skills in differentiating instruction by moving from whole group to small group instruction but differentiation at the level of the individual student is only just emerging among the staff, many of whom are very new to the profession. Students appreciate the care and effort teachers demonstrate in helping them to learn and consistently point to the advisory system as a good source of support for social and academic growth. This is also a conduit for monitoring and encouraging student attendance, which, at 92.3% for the middle school is quite satisfactory. However, high school attendance currently averages 82.2% and tardiness has increased, despite increased focus on this problem.

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 proficient.

As a relatively new school with a largely inexperienced staff, much effort has been directed at providing support and feedback for the development of good instructional practices that are effectively increasing teachers' repertoires and skills. The principal, aspiring principals and instructional support staff give good and frequent assistance and direction to teachers that is tightly aligned to the school's stated instructional expectations. Further, teachers receive training in conducting peer observations that gives excellent support to the increased practice of intervisitations currently underway. Teachers are collaborative and open to sharing effective practices and common planning time supports this. Structures do not yet support planning and sharing across grades, thus inhibiting necessary cross grade curricular and instructional sharing essential to ensuring continuity in a growing school. Bi-weekly professional development programs provided by the school enhance the very effective and frequent professional development provided by The College Board. These programs are tailored carefully to the needs of individual staff and to the needs of the school.

The advisory structure is very effective in providing a deep and strong context for supporting student's academic, social and emotional growth. This is enhanced by an extensive college preparatory program consisting of weekly lessons and numerous trips to institutions of higher learning that increase students' aspirations and confidence. The school's very effective partnership with The College Board and the institutions' shared mission for academic and social development is evident in these practices. Clear expectations and procedures for operational and behavioral aspect are delineated in handbooks. Highly respected peer mediation, conflict resolution and behavioral modification courses and programs provide reinforcement. Despite these, and the very good support provided through the advisories and by guidance and social service personnel, there are still persistent disciplinary issues among some students in the school and between campus and neighborhood schools.

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 and its partner share the vision and mission of the school mutually. These, and the school's core values, permeate planning and goal setting at every level. On an annual basis, school-wide plans are used effectively to guide subsequent planning. The lack of measurable interim goals and timelines, however, inhibit incremental objective judgments regarding progress towards goals within the school year. The administrative team is very focused on monitoring and supporting each teacher's development and outcomes and teachers have identified their areas of need. However, teachers have not formalized specific goals for their instructional improvement and the subsequent increases in student achievement.

The effectiveness of plans for students in key areas, such as special education, English language learners and those receiving academic intervention services are monitored effectively by specialist personnel and through progress on periodic assessments. At the middle school, results from periodic and diagnostic assessments effectively inform supplemental instruction for students identified with specific deficits. At the high school, scholarship report data as well as Regents pass rates are effectively reviewed and analyzed. Results of this analysis has led, for example to the realignment of the math program to match standards. Weekly cabinet meetings are the epicenter for monitoring, revising and planning for all aspects of the school. Data regarding achievement, attendance, enrollment, and occurrences are constantly analyzed and are used to plan next steps in a fluid and responsive manner.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Pathways College Preparatory 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		

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