



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Eximius College Preparatory Academy**

**Middle School - High School 250**

**1363 Fulton Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10456**

**Principal: Tammy Smith**

**Dates of review: February 7 - 8, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Vivian McIver**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Eximius College Preparatory Academy is a middle school–high school with 412 students from grade 6 through grade 11. The school population comprises 54% Black, 43% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 7% 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 92.5%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 73.5% eligibility.

The school's main purpose is to enroll students who have not gained good grades in their earlier school careers, and to enhance their academic achievement to the point where they can aspire to enter the higher academic institution of their choice.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal provides a powerful vision and dynamic leadership and sets the tone for hard work, respect and trust that is evident throughout the school.
- An extensive range of data, carefully analyzed and acted upon, informs and guides all aspects of the work of the school.
- The staff's strong commitment to the use of data to support student learning is helping to drive up student performance and progress.
- The staff's efforts in data analysis and application are well supported by strong management structures and effective professional development.
- Curriculum content, development and evaluation are successfully focused on the analyzed needs of the students.
- Goal setting for all students, and for the school's comprehensive development program, is underpinned by extensive data analysis.
- Team work and the sharing of good practice among the staff are strong features of the school's professional development program.
- The school's contractual arrangements for establishing a partnership in learning with students, parents and care givers are highly successful.
- The school's mentoring system for new teachers is well developed and effective as is the structure to support experienced teachers.
- The school makes full and effective use of the high level of support offered by the College Board Schools organisation.

### What the school needs to improve

- Monitor closely the progress of both gender groups and the effectiveness of the remedial action to improve boys' achievement.
- Explore the use of educational technology including scantron to engage students directly with data and diagnostic self-assessment.
- Focus more firmly on the agreed goals in grade six, especially for groups of boys, and also on the timeframes for boys reaching goals.

## 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 school has made significant progress in its use of data to inform planning and goal setting. The principal provides dynamic leadership and is supported by staff who are equally committed to her vision for the school and to raising the achievement of the students. Together they have succeeded in creating a school environment that is purposeful and conducive to learning, with warm relationships and cooperative approaches. Staff, students and parents work together in an effort to achieve the challenging but realistic goals for the school. Carefully chosen data is rigorously analyzed and drives the school's planning and goal setting. Staff at all levels are well trained in the necessary techniques of data management and incorporate the use of data as a normal aspect of their work. Data also underpins the excellent professional development program and the mentoring support provided for the staff. This forms the basis for the successful differentiated teaching evident throughout the school. The school has been very successful in actively involving parents and care givers in the education of their children.

The school acts promptly when the data indicates action to be necessary. Recent data revealed that the girls are achieving significantly better than the boys. As a result, the school immediately put plans in place to monitor the achievement level of boys much more closely, and to evaluate the strategies used to improve their progress. It is also beginning to exploring the use of available educational technology to engage students more directly with data and the techniques of self-assessment. The principal and cabinet have effectively addressed the areas for improvement noted in the last review by thoroughly revising the school development program to include longer- term strategies, and through systematic monitoring of the teachers' use of data in differentiated instruction. The concentrated work of the Inquiry Team on aspects of strategic planning and on methods of supporting differentiated teaching to meet the needs of the students in the focus group has helped to inform and guide these successful developments.

### **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 School gathers data from a variety of sources, most notably ARIS and Acuity but also from learning logs, portfolios, conferences, and observation, and makes relevant

data available to staff in the form of Excel spreadsheets. To help the school compare its achievements with similar schools it also makes effective use of annual data provided by the College Board Schools. The school uses the data in its planning at all levels and the beneficial effects are apparent in the classrooms. Target setting based on data is a major strength, and the careful revisions of targets driven by the data have significant effects on student achievement.

The school's support arrangements are informed by data. If assessment outcomes show that a student needs additional support, an action plan is developed that focuses very effectively on the student's real needs, and achievement is then monitored regularly. However, boys generally continue to under perform in the school. The goals in grade 6 for groups of under-achieving boys and the timeframes set for improving their achievement are not sufficiently focused at present. Members of staff are strongly committed to the use of data to inform their planning and instruction. Effective management structures and comprehensive professional development ensures that staff at all levels are well trained in the necessary techniques of data management and incorporate the use of data as a normal aspect of their work.

**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 weekly curriculum and grade meetings provide staff with regular opportunities to take stock of progress, exchange information and to collaborate on goal setting. The last review highlighted the need for higher-achieving students to be identified and be given more appropriate goals. Data analysis has now helped the teachers to identify those students who can benefit from greater academic challenge. The introduction of stimulating activities in the form of extended-activity folders in every classroom and the increased use of differentiated instruction ensure that all students are challenged. The data shows that the progress of individual students and groups is already improving as a result of these arrangements.

Effective goal setting based on data permeates the whole school. At the strategic level, the principal and her colleagues set challenging goals for the school as a whole. Grade leaders, subject area leaders and teachers then set goals for each subject, grade and student guided by the school's overall strategy. Students are aware of the goals set for them, can discuss them knowledgeably and produce data to show they are making progress to meet their individual goals. As yet students are not using available technology to undertake diagnostic self-assessment.

The school has begun to deal with the low achievement of boys compared with girls. There is now a mentoring program for boys, and more resources have been allocated to providing materials that will help stimulate boys to become more willing learners. There is a "boys only" book club, lunch-time and after-school tutoring, and a social worker has been added to the guidance team. This concentrated effort is beginning to have a positive impact on boys' achievement. The school has excellent arrangements in place to involve parents actively in their children's education. The parents speak highly of the vision the school has for their children, and the great effort the staff make to involve them in helping their children achieve their goals. In addition to guiding parents in

workshops on how to comprehend data and assist with homework, the school sends them a monthly progress report, contacts them regularly by phone and e-mail and provides them with access to “gradebook.com” so that they can regularly check on their child’s grades.

**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 school’s main goal is to raise students’ achievement to a point where they can make a realistic bid for places in colleges and universities. The monitoring of data, both formative and summative, is undertaken with this ambition for all students in mind. Well-planned instruction is everywhere directed to achieving this aim and is firmly focused on goal setting, raising achievement and on meeting the specific needs of groups and individual students. Teachers regard data analysis as a routine part of their daily duties, and use it effectively to inform their instructional planning. As a result, differentiated instruction is in place across all classrooms

Decisions about curriculum content, and curriculum development and evaluation, focus rigorously on meeting the needs of students. In addition to all the normal subjects, the school enriches its curriculum by offering theatre studies, fencing, martial arts, and keyboard classes. Students enjoy participating in these programs which help to enhance their learning and support their academic and personal growth. In addition, each year the school introduces students to a different theme such as art history which serves to further broaden their experiences.

An exceptionally warm climate of trust and good-will is apparent throughout the school. Students and staff treat one another with considerable mutual respect. The classrooms are stimulating and cheerful. They are full of examples of student work and instructive displays that overflow into the hallways and contribute strongly to the positive learning environment.

**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 principal and her senior colleagues undertake regular classroom visits and provide teachers with supportive formal and informal feedback. The visits involve a careful scrutiny of the quality of instruction and learning and help ensure that high standards are maintained. They also serve to monitor the consistency and effectiveness of the differentiated approach to instruction which has been developed throughout the school. The rigorous monitoring of the quality of instruction, together with realistic goal setting and detailed analysis of test results, is a major factor in ensuring the school achieves its goals. It also helps inform the planning and content of high quality professional development which successfully enhances the staff’s capacity to continue to improve their practices. The very well-organized arrangements for teacher peer observation

provide valuable opportunities for useful professional discussions and effective practical team work.

The support provided for the induction and support of new teachers is equally effective and appreciated. New teachers are allocated a mentor who meets with them regularly to plan lessons and to discuss issues and any problems. All new teachers attend professional training sessions organised by the College Board Schools' Centre for Learning. The current focus of these courses is on developing the teachers' skill as student advisers which is particularly helpful to new teachers in this school where every teacher has a designated student advisory role. Students comment that they greatly appreciate the easy access to personal advice and support provided by the teachers.

In addition to the College Board, which is the school's main source of outside support, the school has established good relations with a number of colleges and universities. The bi-monthly student visits to these institutions acquaint them with what they offer. Students talk knowledgeably about the higher education courses and how the visits have encouraged them to work hard to gain admission.

**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's systematic record keeping, from the class teachers' data binders to the senior staff's comprehensive records, ensure that student achievement is objectively monitored within set time frames. Any adjustment to goals is carried out in consultation with the student, parents, teachers and the senior staff. Periodic assessments of progress are carried out using "Grade Master" which brings to light any particular difficulties encountered by groups or whole classes. The Acuity process also helps with interim assessments for English language arts and math, and provides reliable data on how classes, grades and individual students are performing.

The goal setting and realignment processes are highly effective. Students' goals, and intervention programs, are quickly adjusted in response to assessment outcomes. The overview which the principal and senior staff maintain on achievement informs the school's overall strategy and this too is subject to prompt review and modification following careful ongoing analysis of the data.

The principal's clear vision for the school drives achievement forward in a spirit of partnership with students, teachers and parents. The process is steadily effecting improvement in grading for the majority of students, all of whom enrolled in the school because their grades were low but academic ambitions high. With data as the prevailing guide, the school is meeting this challenge in an environment that is secure, well organised and affirming.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Eximius College Preparatory Academy</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	

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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	

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent do . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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>