

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

Medgar Evers College Preparatory School

Middle-High School 590

**1186 Carroll Street
Brooklyn
NY 11225**

Principal: Dr. Michael Wiltshire

Dates of review: October 7 - 8, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Michael Clifford

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Medgar Evers College Preparatory School is a middle-high school with 884 students from grade 6 through 12. The school population comprises 95% Black, 3% Hispanic, 0.5% White, and 0.5% Asian students. The student body includes 0.2% English language learners and 2% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 90%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Medgar Evers College Preparatory School, in its second year covering the complete 6-12 program, and demonstrates a unified college preparatory philosophy. It is supported in part by an arrangement whereby teachers instruct students across the full grade range. The school selects its sixth grade students by test and interview from a large number of applications and explicitly communicates its high expectations to all. As a result, many middle grade students are successful in passing Regents exams and participating in advanced placement courses before ninth grade. The rate of students graduating and gaining admittance to two- and four-year colleges has increased steadily each year as have attendance figures. Similarly, the number of students earning Regents diplomas and scoring in the upper range of Advanced Placement exams has improved encouragingly.

The dynamic principal transmits to the entire school community his firm belief that students can achieve at high levels when academic work is sufficiently challenging and focused support is provided. His passion for excellence for each student is unmistakable and communicated with utmost clarity and is the basis for his vision for the continual development of the school. Staff share in the overall mission of the school and support the principal's high expectations. This is illustrated both by the number of teachers who have been trained and apply in Advanced Placement course instruction and by their extensive participation in summer, after-school, and Saturday programs. Students receive practice with mock exams to instill confidence. Parents express appreciation for the school's overwhelming willingness to do whatever it takes to ensure that each student succeeds.

Recognizing the need to attract more boys because of gender imbalance, and realizing the relative performance gap of some of the male students, the school has instituted what they call "affirmative action for boys". This provides a safety net of academic support services to ensure that this subgroup of students can be successful. As a result, the disparity in achievement for boys relative to girls has lessened considerably.

Staff demonstrate a range of instructional styles and actively seek to promote student engagement, high standards, and high-level thinking and discussion. The practice of utilizing differentiated instruction strategies, however, is limited whether through varying content or approach. This results in missed opportunities to provide instruction tailored specifically to individual and small group needs and thereby raising achievements.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The vision for the school clearly focuses on efforts to “turn out a better graduate” with school-wide goals aimed at maximizing student growth.
- The comprehensive monitoring of grade-level trends and individual student performance on Regents and Advanced Placement exams leads to improved results.
- The school’s in-depth curriculum is engaging and demonstrates the importance placed on all core subject areas.
- A strong partnership with Medgar Evers College in conjunction with the work of the counseling team enables the school to support college preparation initiatives and to capitalize on resources creatively.
- The principal and his assistant principals provide focused, dynamic leadership and communicate high expectations for achievement to students and their families.
- The supportive and respectful culture in the school provides an environment in which students feel challenged to excel complementing the school’s strong emphasis on high standards.

What the school needs to improve

- Provide opportunities for additional collaboration among and within departments to strengthen interdisciplinary collaboration and vertical alignment.
- Continue to refine and expand the school’s data systems to provide even more regular progress measures across the full range of core subject areas.
- Using the success of the “Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum” initiative as a model to provide training in differentiation of instruction and ensure teachers match content and learning styles, as well as to increase the challenge and support for individual students and subgroups.
- Expand the custom of creating and adapting instruction to needs-based groups as one element of teachers’ instructional practice.

Part 3: Main Findings

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school generates a wide range of assessment data and examines it strategically to help ensure continuous improvement. At the end of each school year, it conducts a comprehensive analysis of student performance and progress data to determine progress made at the level of individual student, class, grade and school and to identify future steps. Potential at-risk students, as well as incoming sixth grade students, participate in a comprehensive summer school program aimed at remediating deficiencies and preparing new students for the rigors of the school's academic program. This careful attention to most data continues at the end of each marking period as course grades are reviewed and analyzed. The school does not always react to variations revealed in data of some subgroups. Nevertheless, throughout the school year, special education students and English language learners, while small in number, make excellent progress as they are given effective support in mainstreamed classes.

Parents express appreciation for the timely and informative contacts made by teachers and administrators to inform them of their child's progress as well as potential areas for concern. The school makes a concerted effort to make parents feel welcome in order for them to be equal and effective partners in furthering the school's mission. As a way to orient them to the school culture and experience what it like to be a student at Medgar Evers, parents of sixth grade students are expected to spend a full day in their child's classroom. Additionally, the Parent Coordinator is viewed as approachable and highly valued. As a result, a significant number of parents participate in substantive ways ranging from involvement in the leadership team and the parent teacher association to being aware of and supportive of their children's' course requirements.

At present, the posting of course information and student progress data online is not a universal practice among school staff which prevents all parents and students having access to valuable information in all classes.

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.

Principal and faculty establish whole-school goals in a purposeful and thoughtful manner which form the basis for school's Comprehensive Educational Plan. The entire school community expects that all students can be successful and that everyone has the potential to pass Regents exams and Advanced Placement courses at an increasingly advanced level. Realistic targets for improvement are set based on a thorough and

objective analysis of most student performance data. Given the school-wide goal of “turning out a better graduate,” students receive extensive support to help them achieve these goals. While a persistent communication, that students are expected to achieve at a high level, is instilled in the earliest grades, little attention is given to differentiate this information for specific subgroups within the overall population to identify weaknesses and make targeted interventions. The school does understand that it is essential not to just to have high expectations, but also to back them up with an extensive range of services and extra help.

While the current inquiry team has only met twice this year, their plans to address issues of the identified group have been clearly outlined because of the worthwhile lessons learned from the inquiry team’s work last year. The target population, a class of grade 8 students, was chosen because of academic and behavioral concerns. In response, the staff have generated a plan to strengthen English language arts and math as well as employ strategies to improve conduct. While early in the year, these actions have already had a positive impact.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The curriculum provides a rigorous and challenging course of study across all core subject areas. The school offers a wide range of advanced placements and supports students to enable them to take as many high level courses as possible as soon as they are deemed ready. As a result, it is not uncommon for students in the middle grades to be in a class with upper grade high school students, and a high percentage of students pass Regents tests before ninth grade. In addition to emphasizing the core subjects and the importance of developing reading and writing across all curriculum areas, the school provides quality instruction in dance, art, and foreign language. Despite the absence of a gymnasium, the school offers a broad range of physical education and sports opportunities to its students.

An atmosphere of striving towards the common goal of achieving high standards contributes to the mutual respect among students, teachers, and the administrators. Administrators routinely teach classes, which sends a powerful message to the school community about their priorities regarding teaching and learning. Teachers at the school are highly knowledgeable about their subject matter and strive to convey this to students in a rigorous and challenging way. Highly engaged students who are actively involved in productive and purposeful work or eager to participate in class discussion uniformly characterize all classrooms.

There is little evidence of needs-based grouping, however, with the predominant grouping arrangement being whole-class or individual. While instruction observed in classrooms is of consistently high quality, every student is provided with the same work.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Formal and informal observations by the administrative team are followed up with constructive feedback for teachers. The process is strengthened by subsequent observations making reference to prior suggestions and areas for improvement. Staff comment on the productive nature of the follow-up which is thought to be both practical and worthwhile.

The school benefits from an effective partnership with adjacent Medgar Evers College. This provides not only the chance for students to take advantage of dual enrollment opportunities, but also much needed resources such as textbooks for Advanced Placement classes and use of specialist facilities. This emphasis on college preparation is fostered by the work of the conscientious counseling team. Counselors work tirelessly to provide valuable guidance regarding the college admissions process as well as encouraging students to avail themselves of the opportunity to take credit-bearing college courses as often as possible. In 2007, 200 students took credit bearing college courses; an increase since 2001. As a result, a significant number of students begin their college experience not only well prepared for college-level work, but with a number of credits already earned.

There has been a deliberate decision to focus on reading and writing across the curriculum as the primary professional development initiative. Consequently, a great deal of time and resources has been expended to ensure that these practices are firmly integrated in all classrooms. Teachers, however, currently do not demonstrate strategies aimed at addressing the needs of multiple groups within their classrooms nor show evidence of utilizing other differentiated instruction practices. Because professional development is largely school-based, teacher input regarding the types of training in order to meet their individual needs is not always taken into account. Additionally, while administrators allocate time for common planning within departments, there is little opportunity for collaboration among departments to allow increased connections between disciplines.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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 principal clearly articulates the vision for the school. This vision becomes the unified focus that instills in students a drive to achieve at the highest levels on course grades, Regents exams, Advanced Placement exams, and ultimately beyond graduation with success in college. Eighty-two per-cent of graduates were awarded a Regents diploma in 2007 and 40% of the seniors graduated with an Advanced Regents diploma a considerable increase for both since 2001. The principal is closely involved monitoring student progress at the classroom level by reviewing end of term grades and ensuring that each individual teacher is provided necessary outreach. "While it is okay to fail a

student, the teacher must document the steps that have been taken to provide support and communicate with parents to help the student succeed.”

The comprehensive monitoring of grade-level trends and individual student performance on Regents and Advanced Placement exams identifies necessary action steps that is leading to improved results. School leaders set ambitious goals for improving the passing rate of an increasing number of exams at higher levels. Not only have students improved the rate at which they score a 3 or higher on a wide range of exams, they have significantly outscored African-American students across the country.

When progress on Regents exams is less than expected, students are interviewed to determine where increased support, such as increased attention on test-taking strategies, is needed. The school does not, however, pay close attention to variations among subgroups and subsequent fine-tuning of planning for differentiation.

In addition to broadly monitoring school-wide goals, the school regularly reviews the progress of students at faculty and department meetings. This collaborative self-assessment is indicative of the willingness of the school to make adjustments when necessary to help achieve the overarching school goal of developing a better graduate.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Medgar Evers College Preparatory School	Δ	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?			X	
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?			X	
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?				X
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?			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 student’s learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?		X		
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			X	
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?			X	
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DY0, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

To what extent do ...	Δ	➤	✓	+
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?			X	
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?		X		
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?			X	
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent do school leaders...	Δ	➤	✓	+
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?			X	
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?			X	
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?			X	
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X	

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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 and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?			X	
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?		X		
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?			X	
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X	

Quality Review Scoring Key							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed