

# **Quality Review Report 2008-2009**

**Eximius College Preparatory Academy**

**Middle School – High School 250**

**1363 Fulton Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10456**

**Principal: Tammy L. Smith**

**Dates of review: November 12 – 13, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Dr. Salvador A. Fernandez**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Eximius College Preparatory Academy is a middle school – high school with 443 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 50% Black, 48% Hispanic, 1% White and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 43% of the students enrolled and girls account for 57%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 93.0%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 73% eligibility.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is proficient.**

Since the last Quality Review, teachers have made good progress in analyzing and interpreting summative and formative data to identify areas in need of further development in English language arts, math, social studies and science. Not enough has been done by school leaders and teachers to improve their teaching practices, however. The curriculum is not engaging, challenging or differentiated enough to encourage students to attain their learning goals. Teachers develop syllabi and curriculum maps for English language arts, math, social studies and science to provide students with clear expectations on how to attain learning goals. The school identified that girls were outperforming boys and immediately put in place strategies that have been successful in providing boys with additional academic services that narrowed the gap. A sense of respect among teachers and students contributes to a positive learning environment. Students appreciate the fact that teachers go beyond the normal school day to enhance their learning, and say that teachers are “helpful and care for our needs”.

The principal communicates high expectations for students’ behavior to develop a positive school tone that is understood by the entire school community. The school’s hallways are decorated with banners that provide students with positive messages and encourage a positive learning environment. School leaders have taken a major step in improving the overall ethos of the school. The school’s guidance department meets with every student monthly, and at-risk students weekly, to go over academic and social needs. This ensures students are aware of their academic requirements for graduation. Telephone calls are made daily to notify parents if their child is absent or late. This has resulted in improved student attendance and fewer students coming to school late. Progress reports are sent home, keeping parents aware of students’ academic progress.

School leaders and faculty have annual school-wide, grade, class and professional goals in place. In addition, the school has begun implementing individual learning goals for students. However, the school does not have a structure in place that strategically supports teachers in assisting students to develop individual student goals that include interim benchmarks and timeframes that will track students’ progress in all core subjects. Furthermore, the school’s action plans do not include measurable interim goals and specific timeframes for evaluating success and in making adjustments throughout the year to ensure that students continue to make academic, personal and professional growth.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal communicates high expectations that are clearly understood by the entire school community.
- The school has made positive strides in analyzing, interpreting and recording summative and formative data in English language arts, math, social studies and science to better understand student performance and progress.
- There is a sense of trust and respect among teachers and students that promotes a positive learning environment.
- Resources have been spent on additional counseling, providing students with the social development needed to improve academic success school-wide.
- The school has an effective system to communicate with families about what is expected of students in English language arts, math, science and social studies.
- The school has strong partnerships with outside organizations to provide support that promotes positive student development.

### What the school needs to improve

- Continue to revise the curriculum in core subjects to engage and challenge students in rigorous instruction and develop teachers' ability to plan differentiated lessons that excite students so that they meet learning goals.
- Develop a structure to support teachers in developing individual student goals that include interim benchmarks and timeframes that will strategically track students' progress.
- Further develop the professional development plan to include a tiered system that will support teachers in developing strategies for engaging learning and differentiated approaches to enhance their instructional practices and improve students' learning outcomes.
- Refine actions plans to include measurable interim goals and timeframes so that the school can more thoroughly track progress towards goals and make adjustments through the year.

## 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.**

School leaders and faculty have made positive strides in disaggregating formative and summative data to complete a composite view of school, class and individual students' learning. The use of assessment binders provides the school with a good system to track the performance and progress of individual students and classes. The school conducts various formative assessments. For example, informal reading inventories and diagnostic tests are given at the beginning of the year to get baseline scores for students in English language arts, math, social studies and science. The teachers have become very familiar with ARIS and print out information to set up groups based on skills need. The school also identified that girls were out-performing boys. Strategies were immediately put in place to provide boys with additional academic services. This resulted in academic improvement and in narrowing the gap.

Attendance is a major priority for the school leaders. A board celebrating perfect attendance is displayed by the main office. The school provides parents with monthly attendance reports. Daily calls are placed to the home of students that are absent or late which have resulted in improvements to students' attendance and fewer late students. Monthly progress reports are sent home to keep parents informed of their child's performance and progress. Additionally, parents are able to go online to check on their child's performance in class. The school also has curriculum night where parents get the syllabus and curriculum map of in the different courses their child attends which provides parents with clear expectations of course work, but does not explain how they can assist their child at home.

The school looks carefully at Learning Environment Surveys and the Progress Report to inform organizational decisions. The school is developing plans to improve communication with families, tighten safety issues and implement individual student goal setting for students to track progress.

**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.**

The principal communicates high expectations for students' academic and social needs that are understood by the entire school community. This year the school will have the first graduating class from high school. The school is predicting that a high number of students will attend college. The school provides students with advanced placement classes. There are systems in place for identifying students in need of

improvement. The periodic assessment data is used to target students and provide them with the opportunity to attend after-school tutoring and credit recovery classes. By providing this additional support students are aware of graduation and course requirements to improve student outcomes.

The school has created a template for students to set goals in core subjects. Teachers hold conferences with students to go over goals and tailor the goals to maximize student outcomes. Class goals are also set to move the entire group forward. Class goals are assessed four times a year. However, the school does not have a structure to support teachers in developing strategic individual student goals that include interim benchmarks and timeframes that will enable the students to track progress in all core subjects.

Teachers meet weekly to analyze and interpret formative and summative data to inform instructional practices and set grade level goals in English language arts, math, science and social studies. Teachers collaborate in content area teams and in developing annual goals. School leaders then share these goals with the school leadership team and select from goals to generate the action plans for the Comprehensive Educational Plan.

**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 Eximius College Preparatory Academy uses the College Board Springboard curriculum for English language arts and this is aligned with State standards. School leaders and teachers complement the College Board Springboard curriculum with a grammar component. Mathematics, science and social studies are all standards-based and part of the City's core curriculum. The school provides art and music for grades 9 to 12. Grades 6 to 8 are able to attend after school programs that provide them with arts instruction which the students enjoy. The curriculum is standards based. Students are engaged in their lessons. Classes are print rich with effective routines.

The school recognizes that further revision of curricula in core subjects is needed to strengthen teachers' ability to plan engaging, challenging and differentiated lessons to improve student outcomes. The curriculum is not tailored to what the individual class and student needs. Teachers plan lessons that are not as challenging or engaging as they could be with the inclusion of differentiated activities. The teacher-generated rubrics used do not allow students to take ownership of their learning.

The school leaders use resources appropriately to continue to encourage a positive learning environment. The addition of a dean and guidance counselor to address students' social and behavioral concerns has contributed to a better ethos. There is mutual respect among teachers and students. Students know that "teachers are always there for support." They can count on teachers whenever they need additional help. Teachers express support for students by providing lunchtime and after-school tutorials to work on academic needs.

**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.**

School leaders use formal and informal observations to provide teachers with constructive feedback and to plan professional development activities to improve instructional practices. Through College Board, new teachers attended an all-day retreat that covered brain research strategies that provided them with new insight on how to engage students in learning. So far the school has conducted training in differentiation, assessments to drive instruction, and an overview of the Quality Review process. The school has a plethora of professional activities that provide teachers with theoretical applications. However, teachers also express the need to obtain differentiated professional development to strengthen their craft. The school does not have a tiered professional development plan that strategically tracks and supports each teacher. As a result, they do not all have the differentiated approaches they need to enhance their instructional practices in all core subjects and to engage students in learning and ultimately improve student outcomes.

Weekly vertical team meetings are held and led by grade level or vertical team leaders, who are members of the effective inquiry team. During the meeting they go over academic and social issues that impede students' learning. The inquiry team has identified the students in the lowest third in English language arts as the target population. There are six teams this year that provide additional academic services to students during after-school and Saturday programs. Articulation with content teachers is provided during weekly meetings to share information on how they can enhance to the students' learning. Teachers find these meetings extremely helpful because it enables to discuss instructional practices being implemented in other classes to improve student learning outcomes. Grade level teachers have taken it upon themselves to schedule an additional meeting to continue planning and discussing how to improve instructional practices. During these meetings, teachers align data and identify students whose skills need improvement and develop strategic plans to improve student outcomes.

The students' social and academic development is a major priority for school leaders and faculty. Guidance counselors meet with students monthly to go over academic and social concerns. This was made possible by the addition of resources and has been effective in improving the climate of the school. Students are becoming aware of the importance of a good quality education. Students are also provided with additional help to remediate or enrich areas of strength or weakness. The school has developed strong partnerships with outside organizations to provide additional support to enhance the work of positively developing students so that they can be successful in future endeavors.

**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 has a clear understanding for the future development of the school. She is fully aware of what is needed to support academic, personal and professional growth. The school enhanced the guidance plan to develop students both socially

and academically by ensuring that teachers meet once a month with a guidance counselor to go over academic records. At this guidance meeting the academic and social progress of individual student's is assessed, and any additional services needed are provided for students to improve learning outcomes.

Teachers meet weekly to go over ways to improve teaching strategies, and tailor the curriculum to meet students' needs within their team. Teachers use assessment data to plan class goals. This is an effective way to keep on pace and ensure that students are on track to meet their goals. Curriculum maps are also distributed to students and parents that show what the expectations are for the course. These maps allow students to keep on pace to achieve academic goals.

The school has provided teachers with one period a week to meet. Vertical teams set annual goals that will guide work throughout the school year. The goals are then reviewed by the school leaders. The goals that are aligned with the needs of the school are incorporated into the Comprehensive Educational Plan. Feedback is provided to teachers with comments that will help to improve instructional strategies. The school's Comprehensive Educational Plan is created in a collaborative setting in which parents teachers and administration all have input to annual plans. The action plans do not to include measurable interim goals and timeframes that will track progress towards these goals and make adjustments through the year to guide the academic and social work to improve student outcomes.

## School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

<b>School name: Eximius College Preparatory Academy</b>	△	➤	✓	+
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
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?			<b>X</b>	
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
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?		<b>X</b>		
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>	

### 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, DYQ, 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.

<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent do ...</i>	△	▷	✓	+			
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				
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X				
<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	△	▷	✓	+			
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				
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X				
<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent do...</i>	△	▷	✓	+			
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				
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
△	Underdeveloped	▷	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed