



**Department of  
Education**

*Joel I. Klein, Chancellor*

**Quality Review Report  
Office of Accountability  
2008-2009**

# **Quality Review Report 2008-2009**

**The Dream Yard Preparatory School**

**High School 329**

**240 East 172 Street**

**Bronx**

**NY 10457**

**Principal: Rod Bowen**

**Dates of review: March 9 – 10, 2009**

**Lead Reviewer: Joel T. DiBartolomeo**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The DreamYard Preparatory School is a high school with 292 students from grade 9 through grade 11. The school population comprises 38% Black, 60% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 40% of the students enrolled and girls account for 60%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 83.2%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 73% eligibility. The school is in its third year of development and will graduate its first class in June 2010.

### Overall Evaluation

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

The principal, who founded the DreamYard Preparatory School, works collaboratively with his staff to enact the school's vision to use the arts as tools to access knowledge and to engage students. The school uses a range of data to understand well the needs of students in all core subjects and for each grade. The school uses data to track a number of sub-groups, as well as to evaluate the impact of curriculum and instruction on student performance. Periodic assessments, created in house, are used across English language arts, math and science classrooms, but this data is most consistency and strategically used with special education, English language learners and other targeted students. Parents and students have access to information related to classroom grades, however, there is no consistent practice of providing them with feedback related to the skills and sub-skills students have learned. As a result, neither students nor their families can identify accurately next steps for student learning.

School constituents work in a variety of collaborative settings to evaluate school progress and set goals. These routines have contributed to a sense of collective responsibility for the results that students realize. In addition, they contribute to the development of trust between and among students, parents, and school staff. However, because the consistent use of interim goals or other benchmarks is not secure, on-going evaluation of impact, particularly for sub-groups, is not rigorous.

The school employs an arts-integrated curriculum based on the State's learning standards and uses resources strategically to support five different arts-based majors. Collaborative team teaching classrooms provide models of good practice for differentiated lessons, but lessons do not challenge or sufficiently engage most students, so learning is compromised and instruction time is not maximized.

The school provides teachers with opportunities to meet routinely to review evidence of student progress, share practices and to build consensus around decisions that directly affect their work. New teachers to the school, benefit from a formal mentoring program. More experienced faculty members, however, do not receive regular targeted feedback regarding their instruction, which delays their development.

Several new initiatives aimed at getting more parents into the school have resulted in an increase in the level of meaningful parent engagement. Students and parents are well supported and enjoy the school's provision for community.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal is a visionary and thoughtful leader who is available, empowering and personable.
- The school analyzes relevant interim and summative information routinely to identify trends in student progress and performance, in order to determine students' strengths and areas of need.
- The school has created interim assessments for all core subject areas that are used to inform instructional planning, set goals and to monitor progress.
- Teamwork and relationships support effective collaborative processes, which enhance student learning through the sharing of assessment data and other relevant student information.
- Special education students, English language learners and target population students make progress because of careful programming, focused support, and their active involvement in the goal-setting process.
- Teachers and students benefit from an environment characterized by respect and appropriate levels of trust.

### What the school needs to improve

- Use assessment data to provide students and families with feedback about student learning that identifies each student's next short-term goal, so that students can articulate their next learning steps.
- Extend and refine goal setting across all content areas and include specific interim checkpoints to support differentiated instruction, the evaluation of impact, and future planning.
- Ensure all teachers use assessment data consistently to inform differentiated instruction and to engage all students in challenging instruction, including the use of effective questioning that elicits higher-order thinking and extends learning.
- Provide teachers with consistent, differentiated feedback and support to enable them to improve their instruction.

## 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.**

Leaders analyze interim and summative data in core subject areas to identify trends in student progress and performance and to determine the strengths and needs of students. English language arts, math and science periodic assessment data is further used to define next learning steps for special populations, classrooms and individual students. The principal maintains a color-coded spreadsheet to track sub-groups and individual students who are on or off track to graduate on time and to monitor attendance. As a result, there are clear systems for the early identification of students falling behind, resulting in timely intervention.

The school has selected the Department of Education's *Design Your Own* periodic assessment option. Teachers use department meetings to select assessment tasks from previous Regents examinations and the Acuity item bank and utilize them as interim assessments to ascertain student mastery of essential curriculum-related skills. While the formulation and analysis of these assessments are of good quality, the processes are time consuming. This compromises teachers' capacity to utilize their results to adapt instruction well. In addition, the aggregation of this classroom data has not yet yielded reports that can be used by the administration to monitor with precision the performance of sub-groups.

The school sends progress reports home to parents, and both parents and students have access to information related to classroom performance through the utilization of a web-based reporting system known as *mygradebook.com*. However, information about student's specific learning needs, such as that which is accrued through the periodic assessment process is not communicated consistently to families or students. This makes it difficult for them to articulate student's next short-term goals and their next learning steps.

**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.**

Parents and staff use a variety of data sources to set school and principal performance goals. At the conclusion of each marking period, teachers review and compare data to long-term goals and a refocusing of efforts ensues. Teachers meet weekly with their grade and department colleagues to analyze student performance data to set and monitor goals in English language arts, math and science. They identify sub-groups of students in need of extra support who subsequently become the subjects of a *DY Prep Academic Achievement Plan*. These plans include a focus on learning academic skills and involve students in formulating short-term goals and the review of feedback to

inform next steps for learning. Except for this good practice, teachers do not use interim checkpoints across all content areas to support differentiated instruction, evaluate impact, or to support future planning.

The school conducts an assortment of parent-information meetings to help parents understand the demands of the core curriculum. In addition, the school invites parents regularly to enjoy an array of venues designed to showcase the artistic talents of their children. The school makes contact with the families of students who are either absent or late. While attendance remains low, more parents are becoming involved actively in the school because of these efforts.

**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 school offers students an arts-enriched, standards-based educational program and students, parents, and teachers all acknowledge the arts as engaging and motivational forces. Students can participate in one of five arts-related majors that include creative writing, dance, media studies, visual arts, and theatre. Perhaps the cornerstone of the school is its partnership with DreamYard, which provides the school with additional funding, connections to the New York City arts community, professional development in the arts, and support for student recruitment. An assortment of arts organizations including the Labyrinth Theatre, the Bronx Museum and Alvin Ailey engage and motivate students and provide them with access to working artists and performance opportunities.

Special service teachers have formed a *Bridges* department in which they use interim assessment data to create individual learning plans and coordinate good differentiated support and instruction for special education students, English language learners and target-population students. However, in most classrooms students are not engaged in challenging work or subject to skillful instruction. The intentions for learning and criteria for success are not always clear, there are few opportunities for students to self assess or access their peers as resources, questioning is not used consistently to extend learning, and feedback to students is not always descriptive. As a result, a number of students are uninterested in academic work and do not try their best.

The school surveys teachers to ensure equitable resource allocation. All teachers have laptops, SMART Boards and other materials to support adequately classroom instruction. The principal uses Town Hall sessions with teachers and students to listen to concerns and respond to questions. Such actions contribute to an environment characterized by respect and good levels of trust.

**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.**

Good teamwork and positive relationships among the staff support effective collaborative processes and capacity building efforts. Grade meetings are used to share student

assessment data and other information that may impact on student learning. On occasion, parents and students attend and contribute. The principal and team leaders structure these meetings, using protocol that lend to their productivity.

The Inquiry Team is currently investigating the use of the arts to help students learn such literacy skills as theme, tone and characterization. The school is now using the instrumentation used to manage target population students with many other students in the school. Last year's study led to implementing common meeting time to enable case conferencing and the creation of individual student plans that provide good support for students in need of acceleration.

The principal conferences with each teacher at the beginning of the year and prior to each formal observation. Through conferences he identifies their strengths and needs and to align support and feedback. Central to this supervisory process is a framework for teaching and learning derived from the *Skillful Teacher* by Saphire and Gower. Because the school does not yet use data in this process, the evaluation of the impact of practice is imprecise.

Mentor teachers support by new teachers effectively, visiting and coaching them twice a week. Mentors also arrange and supervise inter-visitations among the new teachers. The principal makes formal and informal visits to all classrooms, but does so more regularly with newer staff members. The school does not provide veteran staff members with the same level of consistent, differentiated feedback, nor support enabling them to improve their instruction. For example, more experienced teachers recognize that to do their best work in creating assessments and writing curriculum, they need to have access to content area expertise that is not an option for them at this time.

**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.**

Each semester, the school adjusts programs and customizes supports for learning as needs emerge. Leaders and faculty use scholarship reports well to identify students for the school's Academic Achievement Academy, where they can receive additional instruction with the option to make up credits. Students in danger of failing their arts classes are brought together for an action plan lunch, during which they plan interventions with their teachers. These events have resulted in recovering credits for at least 25% of the students who participate. The school supports students with the most serious challenges effectively in a program provided by a new external partner, the organization RISK.

Leaders examine major accountability indicators rigorously, providing the rationale for whole-school goals. Departments analyze Regents and periodic assessment data and modify curriculum maps, adjust schoolwide action plans and inform re-teaching. However, leaders do not use precise short-term goals or benchmarks to measure incremental progress, making it difficult for the school to monitor progress towards its goals. In addition, new strategies are not always connected directly to the findings in the data and teachers cannot say which strategies have been effective or why. The principal has created successfully opportunities for staff, students and parents to embrace and influence with their own views his vision for DreamYard Preparatory High. This vision is for a school where the arts are tools to develop scholarship, artistry and

character. The level of collective ownership that results serves to support on-going planning activities by providing the school with a clear path to the future.

# School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

<b>School name: The Dream Yard Preparatory School</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>	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				
<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>	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				
<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>	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				
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed