

Quality Review Report 2009-2010

Esperanza Preparatory Academy

**Middle School 372
240 East 109th Street
Manhattan
New York 10029**

Principal: Alexandra Estrella

Dates of review: December 14 - 15, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Luz Cortazzo

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Esperanza Preparatory Academy is a middle school with 110 students from grade 6 through grade 7. The school population comprises 25% Black, 72% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 34% English language learners and 45% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 94.5%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

The principal has created a positive school culture of trust and respect visible in the daily interactions between the staff and the community. The school's curricula in all core subjects underpin the delivery of standards-based instruction. The syllabi include content-specific goals and unit tests, as well as design-your-own interim assessments that measure student progress. There is a transparent approach towards measuring progress and goal setting. Charts with schools goals, grade goals and content-specific goals posted throughout the building and in classrooms are testaments to the school's direction. Students work on differentiated skill clinics based on their individual needs, thereby, increasing their chances of academic success. Students and their families take part in ongoing discussions about progress and expectations. However, there is scope to ensure that all constituents are able to make a full contribution to school improvement and student success. Strong partnerships make a positive contribution to students' academic success and help raise their self-esteem. The expanded enrichment activities include track and field, swimming, soccer, technology, drama, music, and Spanish. The varied support structures, driven by the principal's clear vision, enable students to meet established learning goals. The school is now seeking to increase its programs and support services to students and families to enhance this further.

The school has well-established practices in its use of formative and summative data. Formative assessments include the beginning and end-of-unit exams, the review of students' work and the analysis of Acuity results in a six-week cycle. The school couples these with the utilization of summative data, followed by a re-teach week using a clinical approach. The school community focuses on using data as a lever to address students' needs. As a result, school staff have made significant progress in narrowing the achievement gap for English language learners and special education students. While rigorous habits and higher-order skills are evident, the school has not yet fully embedded them across all content areas. Not all students receive suitable challenge. Additionally, although school faculty regularly evaluates instructional practices in response to learning needs, these practices do not always provide extensions in order to accelerate the learning of all high-achieving students. The principal's strong belief in distributed leadership results in strategic use of the budget, enabling teachers to work on teacher teams several times each week. They continually learn from each other and collectively support their own pedagogic growth. Trust and respect enables them to share best practices through critical friends groups, review of professional literature and collegial intervisitations. The strategically designed Monday teacher sessions, provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate, and monitor student progress towards interim and long-term goals.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Collaborative teams on every grade provide opportunities for teachers to reflect on their practice to strengthen instruction and evaluate student learning.
 - The creation of interim assessments in six-week cycles has enabled teachers to measure individual student progress. This has resulted in strategically designed skill clinics to target individual students' needs.
 - The strategic use of grade-level teacher teams to elevate the expertise of teachers in analyzing data and sharing strategies and ideas, have resulted in teachers using data to differentiate instruction.
- Relationships across the school are warm, supportive and inclusive, resulting in an environment that is conducive to high levels of academic and personal success.
 - There are rich displays of student work in all classrooms and on hallway bulletin boards with corresponding rubrics and teacher feedback, thus allowing school constituents to aim high and assess progress towards meeting established targets.
 - The school's inclusive culture is evident by the active participation of parents and staff on the school leadership team. Because of the team's in-depth review of school data from the Learning Environment Survey and Quality Review, school leaders were able to utilize the budget to expand technology. They recognize this as an area where lower-performing students excel. As such, teachers use technology to get students more excited and involved so their self-esteem grows and carries over into other content areas.
- The school engages students and their families in ongoing discussions around student progress and high expectations.
 - The ongoing review of data from summative and formative assessment drives the development and utilization of focused grade-level goals and action plans for individuals and groups of students. This successfully informs planning at all levels.
 - Students assess their own progress and articulate their next learning steps at the "Scholar Led Conferences" three times a year. This keeps parents informed about their child's progress and provides a vehicle for them to collaborate with the school to support learning. The well-executed conferences enable staff to give encouraging feedback so students can take ownership of their learning and succeed.

- Professional collaboration is a high priority and faculty profit from varied opportunities to share and develop their strengths as individuals and as members of the teaching community.
 - School leaders conduct walkthroughs on an ongoing basis utilizing a uniform rubric. They provide effective written feedback so that teachers can adapt their practices and continually evaluate students' progress toward meeting established interim goals. Staff provide critical input to the development and revision of the Comprehensive Educational Plan and self-evaluation form, as well as the development and revision of grade-level goals.
 - Teams of teachers meet at structured grade-level meetings, but also informally serve as critical friends to each other. Consequently, they display genuine ownership of the school goals with a focus on improving instructional practices and student achievement.
- The school routinely analyzes relevant data to identify trends in student progress and performance and adjust the curriculum and instruction.
 - Well-established, time-bound data management systems enable the school to obtain a clear and up-to-date picture of students' performance and progress. During grade-level collaborative meetings and one-to-one meetings with school leaders, staff adjust teacher-developed tools with a clear focus on the assessment of learning.
 - The school makes consistent use of beginning and end-of-unit assessments, data from conference notes, skills analyses of State assessments and interim assessments. It utilizes these well to identify gaps in learning and identify the need to teach or re-teach particular aspects of each unit.
- The school has strong partnerships that have a positive impact on students' social, emotional and academic development.
 - Purposeful partnerships have contributed towards students' good academic, personal and social development by providing them with the opportunity to develop their linguistic skills and practice literacy utilizing skill tutors. One program has offered students instruction in track and field, resulting in positive attitudes toward physical fitness, thereby, improving their self-esteem.
 - School social workers and staff from the integrated support center provide well-delivered professional development to support staff. This enables teachers to ensure that guidance for students is strong and aligns to their academic and socio-emotional needs.
- Staff have fully adopted the principal's collaborative, positive leadership and her transparent approach toward measuring progress and goal setting as a motivating force to make continuous improvements to student achievement.
 - School leaders conduct formal and informal observations, as well as walkthroughs on a daily basis utilizing a uniform rubric. They provide

written feedback so that teachers can modify their practices and continually evaluate students' progress toward meeting established interim goals.

- The cabinet works cohesively to review and analyze data to guide the school forward with consistency. It shares its vision with the school community to improve student outcomes by refining practice and curricula to meet students' needs.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase the range of programs and support services for students and families to increase student achievement.
 - Although the school has good partnerships with outside organizations that bring programs into the school for students, currently it does not have outreach programs so that families can receive support and services outside the school.
 - School leaders and faculty engage in ongoing discussions about student progress, but school leaders do not train all parents on the use of ARIS parent link. As a result, the utilization of the tool is not yet an embedded school-wide practice.
- Ensure that all constituent groups are involved in school-wide goal setting to increase the base of support for continued school improvement.
 - While school leaders and faculty engage in ongoing discussions about student progress, school leaders have not yet established interim benchmarks across subject areas so that they can monitor progress and revise the instructional program of individual students as necessary.
 - While school leaders and staff communicate high expectations to parents, there is not enough regular communication and collaboration to increase parents' capacity to assist in their child's learning and track progress towards attaining set goals.
- Refine the curriculum further in order to emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills for higher achieving students.
 - School leaders and staff make purposeful decisions that align the curriculum with key standards. However, the rigorous habits and higher-order skills, evident in some classrooms, is inconsistent across content areas. As a result, not all students receive sufficient challenge.
 - The school utilizes data to group students based on skill and teachers plan differentiated activities for groups of students. However, these practices at times do not coherently provide extensions for higher achieving students in order to accelerate their learning.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: Esperanza Preparatory Academy	△	▷	✓	+
Overall QR Score				X
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			X	
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?			X	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?				X
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X	
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?				X
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?				X
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?				X
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X

Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.

<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?				X
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?				X
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?				X
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X

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

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?				X
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?				X
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?				X
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals 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 progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X	
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?				X
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?				X
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X

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