

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

Pelham Preparatory Academy

11X542

**925 Astor Avenue
Borough
NY 10469**

Principal: Jane Aronoff

Dates of review: December 13 – 14, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Catherine M. Powis

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Pelham Preparatory Academy is a high school with 507 students from 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 40% Black, 43% Hispanic, 7% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 89.5%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- All stakeholders agree that the school is a respectful, nurturing environment which enables students to receive a good level of support in their personal and academic development.
 - Students are quick to share the attention that their teachers extend to them when they are falling behind in their coursework, and how teachers “push them to learn.” As one student expressed during a student interview, “This is a high school with a small school feel.” This ensures that every student receive individualized support to advance their personal and academic success.
 - Student voice is explicitly demonstrated in the school’s award-winning newspaper publication, *The Panther Press*, a collection of investigative reporting, persuasive essays, and critical and argumentative stories with excellent photography to match articles. Thus, this collective experience sharpens career and college-ready skills that contribute to a very high college acceptance rate across cohorts.
- School leaders and faculty ensure that both students and families are well-informed of the high expectations that the school sets so that all learners make significant progress.
 - All stakeholders consistently convey high expectations through the policies and practices that drive high results from students. Even varsity and team coaches maintain attendance, behavior, and academic standards for student participation. Students as well as their parents make the claim that these standards are a motivating factor that results in students achieving high grades and good attendance as evidenced in honor roll achievement.
 - Parents are appreciative of opportunities to engage in shared decision-making with the principal resulting in fund-raising activities, trips to colleges, and participation in college summits. Many spoke of the reason for choosing this high school was the school’s commitment to the high expectation for all students to be college and career ready upon graduation. This results in a 91.8% graduation rate for the 2010 cohort.
- An extensive network of external partnerships fostering social/emotional as well as academic development of students supports career and college-ready goals.
 - The school has established relationships with several colleges to augment students’ experiences to the world beyond the high school. For example, the University of Vermont sponsors an extensive program commencing in freshman year to get students in a college-going mindset that takes students from completing college applications and essay writing to interviews, trips to colleges, and assistance in their academic careers. Lehman College assisted the school in reinstituting the Summer Bridge Program for incoming freshman providing interdisciplinary classes in English, mathematics, and art, and preparing ninth graders for the “...high school with a college view.” Guidance counselors, social workers, and teachers frequently attend workshops and training sessions that support students in these endeavors. This and other intensive support resulted in 100% of 2010 cohort of graduates accepted to various colleges.

- Students benefit from a rigorous, standards-based curriculum, that includes a variety of specialized courses and internship opportunities which drives student success resulting in increases in meeting advanced diploma requirements.
 - Since the school's goal is to have all students attend post-graduate school all curriculum coursework meets State standards with the further expectation that all students take four years of mathematics and four years of science leading to an Advanced Regents diploma. This is matched with a great majority of students participating in internships at colleges and hospitals throughout the northeast to supplement classroom activities and tasks with field experiences. As a result all 2010 cohort graduates received college acceptances.
 - Driven by an analysis of student writing and data study in ARIS specialized course offerings are planned that tackle specific academic deficits in writing and literacy for special education and lower achieving students. Higher achieving students are offered rigorous, college-level, advanced placement courses on site or at a college, including four years of a foreign language, and electives, such as, marine biology. Consequently, all learners are challenged and engaged in their studies.
- Improvements in learning are supported by informed and effective organizational decisions across all aspects of the school in order to support improvements in learning.
 - The principal strategically analyzes scholarship data and comparative State Regents exam results that lead to allocating resources to provide skill-based student and teacher programs and assignments that support learning. For example, students are placed in writing and U.S. literacy courses based on data indicating deficits in these areas. In turn, leadership courses challenge high achieving seniors to become mentors and tutors to freshman and sophomores leading to better grades.
 - Lower class sizes and teacher/student ratios are a high priority when making budgetary decisions. As a result resource room classes support 4 to 6 students per period, and are paralleled to allow flexible grouping of students. Writing and literacy classes have lower class registers where possible. This flexible model results in gains in closing the achievement gap for students in the lowest third on the school's progress report.
- School leaders and teacher teams have systems in place that measure long term goals for individuals and groups of students to ensure student progress from grade to grade and across cohorts.
 - Annual student performance data analysis of current and future cohort results in ongoing alignment of goals as demonstrated in the school's Comprehensive Education Plan, the principal's performance goals, and the school self-evaluation form. Revisions are underway as the content area teachers begin to integrate the expectations of the evolving state standards into academic tasks, as discussed and reviewed by the ninth grade inquiry team of teachers. As a result student work products reflect rigor and improvements in learning.
 - The special education teacher team meets regularly to assess the needs of targeted special education students using Performance Series interim assessments to measure their progress toward specified interim goals. Consequently, these teachers determine the worth of their collective effort to improve their practice over time that, in turn, improves targeted student progress.

What the school needs to improve

- Implement a yearlong professional development plan with long-term impact tightly aligned to school-wide goals and ensures improved teacher practices and student outcomes.
 - Professional development opportunities are typically linked to social/emotional needs of students and various school-wide programs. However, the calendar of professional development offerings is not closely aligned to the school-wide instructional goal to differentiate instruction. This reduces teacher capacity to provide rigorous instruction that meets the learning needs of students.
 - School leaders have not yet taken advantage of model teaching and classrooms that are exemplars of best practices by regularly scheduling intervisitations as an integral part of professional development. This limits ways in which teachers can analyze student and teacher work to improve their practice and student progress.
- Ensure that all classrooms reflect teaching strategies and routines that are differentiated in order to meet the needs of individual and groups of students and improve outcomes.
 - Although some teachers use a variety of classroom strategies that support differences in students' learning styles, interests, and abilities, other teachers do not design activities that engage the highest and lowest achieving students. In addition, some teachers still demonstrate teacher-directed lesson planning not allowing students' frequent opportunities to cement their learning through a peer exchange of ideas and assessments. Consequently, current levels of student engagement, motivation, and thinking vary as evidenced in student work produced in many classrooms.
- Expand assessment practices that guarantee coherence across classrooms and content areas to ensure ongoing identification of specific and detailed learning needs of students in order to improve student outcomes.
 - Current grading and reporting systems allow teachers to decide on criteria for numerical assessment of student work products typically by teacher or by department. In addition, although Acuity assessments are analyzed there is no formalized classroom assessment system, such as, conferencing and use of rubrics, consistently embedded in classroom practice to regularly assess student learning. This lack of coherence in assessment practices inhibits teacher teams and individual teachers from identifying more granular strengths and needs of student subgroups in order to differentiate instructional strategies and improve student outcomes.
- Ensure greater consistency in teacher pedagogy and student work through explicit feedback by school leaders with clear next steps to ensure improvement aligned to school wide goals.
 - Although there is a common instructional focus defined by school-wide goals, there is a lack of coherence in the feedback from school leaders extended to teachers in their written observation reports. This inhibits consistency from classroom to classroom in how teachers can improve their practice in identified areas such as differentiating instruction, and what students are expected to know and be able to do. Consequently, staff commitment to goal attainment is reduced.
 - Teachers who seek to improve their content knowledge and pedagogy are encouraged to extend their learning by attending professional development off site. However, targeted and differentiated opportunities are not strategically planned in order to elevate school-wide instructional practices.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: Pelham Preparatory Academy	UD	D	P	WD
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, 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	

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>	UD	D	P	WD
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

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>	UD	D	P	WD
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

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>	UD	D	P	WD
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	

Quality Review Scoring Key

UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed
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