

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**Teachers Preparatory High School
Secondary School K697**

**226 Bristol Street
Brooklyn
NY 11212**

Principal: Carmen Simon

Dates of review: December 27-28, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Aimee Horowitz

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Teachers Preparatory High School is a Secondary School with 572 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 85% Black, 13% Hispanic, 0% White, 1% Asian students and 1% other students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 33% of the students enrolled and girls account for 67%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 93.4%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Teachers align curricula to strategically selected core standards and are integrating Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) tasks across the school with a focus on students mastering key standards in order to be college ready upon commencement. (1.1)
 - The school has purposefully aligned instruction to targeted goals and standards with classroom pedagogy across the curriculum engaging students in common core aligned tasks that require students to use evidence based discourse orally and in written pieces as well as to explain their thinking and problem solving strategies. Scaffolding through the use of graphic organizers, sentence starters, pre-writing activities, accountable talk prompts, and consistent development of academic vocabulary support all students including Students with Disabilities, English Language Learners, and students in the lowest third, in learning to ask challenging questions and in completing tasks at a high level. Further, in class debates support students in being able to use evidence to support claims and refute counterclaims. Students report that as a result of the use of subject specific graphic organizers, they are better able to organize their writing, ensure that their claims are supported by evidence, and write about the processes they use to solve problems. Students' current class work, along with the school's college preparatory course index score at 13% above its peer average, and its college readiness index being 7.3% above its peer index, are evidence that students are postsecondary ready upon commencement. In addition, earning additional credit for making exemplary gains for students in the lowest third citywide indicates that the school is successfully closing the achievement gap.
- The principal's strategic organizational, resource, and scheduling decisions are aligned with students' learning needs and support improved learning outcomes. (1.3)
 - To support increasing Regents passing percentages and to better track students' progress in using "evidence" in their writing, 9th grade Global History teachers intentionally loop with students to 10th grade. Seventh grade science and English teachers also loop with students as well as the 6th grade English teacher. Looping facilitates greater awareness of students' strengths and weaknesses, better enables teachers to target instruction to meet students' needs, and ensures that students are well known. Strategic placement of strong teachers who have high expectations for all students and strong classroom management skills in the 9th grade builds a solid foundation for achievement in the high school. Intentionally limiting cross age and grade teaching between middle and high school, along with programming students for a six period day, decreases teacher load. Common planning time is built into all teachers' schedules such that department teams plan collaboratively in whole and small groups. These structures increase teacher accountability for student growth and for achievement of school wide goals. To increase students' time in the classroom and enable them to meaningfully collaborate with classmates to produce a product, each class meets for one hour. Students participate in math class and math lab and in English, 9th grade students are enrolled in a Common Core aligned debate class that supports social studies writing and critical thinking through the use of creating viable arguments and refuting counterclaims with evidence from non-fiction texts. For the high school, this has lead to students in the lowest third citywide making exemplary gains by scoring 75% or higher on Regents examinations in math. Additionally, the weighted Regents pass rate in

Global History increased from 1.48 to 2.16, and the weighted Regents pass rate in math improved from 1.87 to 2.20.

- Frequent, strategic, and focused observation feedback with the use of a researched based framework, provides teachers with clear expectations, strengths, and next steps to improve their practice and increase student learning. (4.1)
 - The principal, her cabinet, and teacher mentors engage in frequent and focused classroom observations providing actionable feedback aligned to a research based rubric. This supports the alignment of professional goals teachers set in conjunction with the principal, as well as an analysis of student work. All teachers reflect on their observations and set goals for their next lesson based on the feedback from administrators. In order to increase effective instructional practices, teachers are regularly advised to inter-visit with particular colleagues to look at a specific aspect of a lesson or strategy. For example, a science teacher visited another science teacher to observe how the teacher uses the lesson's closing to engage and assess students in order to inform his next day's instruction, as well as to reflect on his own performance. Teachers also regularly participate in "walk about" observations to look at one another's classrooms for effective practices across the school. Accordingly, teachers share an understanding of effective instruction that is translated into elevated practice as they progress towards meeting goals to raise student achievement.
 - Using a research based rubric, teachers are provided accurate feedback on their strengths, their progress towards meeting individual goals, and their next steps. Via the rubric and prior feedback, teachers self assess and collaborate with the principal to set professional goals around effective and challenging questioning techniques. Teachers agree that coupled with the rubric, the short, frequent snapshots provide a common language around expectations and feedback that allows them to assess their own progress, understand their own needs, and set goals to improve their practice for increasing student outcomes.
- Staff gathers and uses a wide range of data across all subjects and grades to identify school wide trends as well as individual and relevant subgroup performance, progress, and learning needs in order to advance student progress. (2.1)
 - The school uses abbreviated Regents assessments, diagnostic assessments, Regents item analysis, scholarship reports, attendance data, and other formative and summative data to analyze student performance and target instructional practices to identify school wide strengths and areas of need, as well as for individual students and subgroups. As a result, the school realized that females are achieving at higher levels than males and that students in all subgroups had difficulty responding to constructed response questions in all core areas. Consequently, the administration provides school wide professional development for teachers around strategies to help students better understand and respond to these types of questions. It also helped teachers learn how to incorporate the skills and strategies necessary to improve their instruction; and led to the school wide inquiry focus on action and directional words. These practices and strategies have been incorporated into instruction across all grade levels and all subject areas. Further, the principal worked with the 7th grade math teacher to implement these strategies, leading to improved assessment results as evidenced by Progress Report results in math where the school performed better than 55.6% of schools in its peer group for the median adjusted growth percentile and better than 76.3% of schools in its peer groups for the median adjusted growth percentile for students in the school's lowest third.

- Teacher teams provide feedback to one another around teacher work, plan collaboratively, and analyze student work resulting in improved teacher practice and student outcomes. (4.2)
 - All teachers are part of departmental inquiry teams. To structure inquiry work and ensure that the focus is aligned to school wide goals, a teacher focus group collaborated with school leaders to create a prototype of what teams should be looking at and doing. Based on their analysis of student work and Regents item analysis, the group determined that the school inquiry focus should be on directional and action words to facilitate students' understanding of what they need to do to proficiently respond to a question or complete a task. Each team administered a diagnostic assessment, and through the analysis of student work produced, created and implemented a strategy to target students' needs within their discipline. The science team designed and implemented a problem solving graphic organizer including prompts to aid students in determining what is given, what they need to find, the equation or explanation they will use to solve, their process of solving, and their answer or claim with supporting details. After administering this diagnostic tool, teachers decided to focus on particular areas based on an analysis of the data and group students according to their specific need. Teachers report that inquiry work has made them keenly aware of students' needs, has helped them in creating and aligning tasks to students' needs, and has improved student achievement in that greater numbers of students are passing exams and classes with grades above 80 percent.
- Individual teachers and teacher teams use data to set long and short term learning goals for their departments, classes, and for individual students that are aligned to school wide goals, are measurable, and shared with students to support next steps. (3.2)
 - An array of data including common diagnostics, midterm and final exams, Regents item analysis, Periodic Assessments, and State tests are used to set annual, interim, timely and measurable goals for all students including students with disabilities. Teachers post and graph progress towards class goals as individual students graph progress towards individual goals maintained in their portfolios. Goals are differentiated based on need and target students' areas of weakness to accelerate their learning and ensure mastery of standards. Class and individual goals drive classroom instruction and inform practice. As a result of this work to aid students in more successfully solving word problems, math teachers have introduced a four step problem solving strategy into their instruction to better support students' comprehension.

What the school needs to improve

- Better support families in using tools to understand student performance and progress, engage them in decision making so they understand strengths, weaknesses, and next learning steps to elevate their children's progress. (2.4)
 - The school's online grading system provides parents with information on students' progress towards meeting school and class expectations, including information on attendance, behavior, and academic strengths and weaknesses. While some teachers fully employ the program to engage students and families in a shared dialogue, inconsistent updating and non-use of the program by others impedes the open exchange of information for some students and their families and prevents some families from tracking their children's progress in specific classes to support their next steps for growth.

- Although the school has a functioning School Leadership Team and a parent organization, parental involvement in decision making is limited, impeding establishment of a culture of shared commitment to the school. Parents commented that the school does not satisfactorily address their concerns, that communication is often limited, and that although during parent-teacher conferences, the school aided parents in using the online system to understand students' progress, the school needs to put additional structures in place to support families in using tools to understand student performance.
- Ensure that each high school student is known well by one adult who coordinates attendance and social emotional learning to impact academic success and refine strategies to more fully engage students in school wide decision making. (1.4)
 - A middle school advisory program reinforces a culture of trust and ensures all middle school students are known well by one adult who supports their social emotional and academic learning. However, the high school's lack of this structure limits support for social emotional learning and student development and does not ensure that each student has a strong connection to one adult at the school, preventing some students from achieving greater academic success.
 - Most students are interested and engaged in their learning, are proud of their successes, are well aware of the school's expectations, and that the school supports their academic success. However, students state that although the principal has an open door policy and listens to their concerns, there is no system or process to ensure that their voice influences school goals or decisions.
- Establish greater consistency in scaffolding questions, in providing extensions, and in differentiating resources so that all students can access source materials and participate in all learning tasks at high levels. (1.2)
 - While professional development is focused on effective questioning, not all teachers provide multiple entry points for students to access lessons, engage students in higher order thinking through questioning and writing tasks, or maximize student learning by providing extensions to support higher achieving students in deepening their thinking in order to expand their potential, thus limiting student achievement. Teacher questioning facilitates student participation and accountable talk with the use of academic vocabulary. However, students do not yet generate their own high level questions and lessons are not guided by student inquiry. Thus, not all learners are pushed to think at higher levels, limiting self guided inquiry and reflection.
- Vary the use of ongoing checks for understanding and provide opportunities for students to self assess and determine the next steps to improve their work. (2.2)
 - While teachers and teacher teams create assessments and rubrics aligned to the school's key standards with particular attention to making valid claims, supporting them with clear accurate evidence, and appropriate sources. They also use assessment results to diagnose areas of need, determine focus for the extended day, and revise curriculum maps to spiral back to areas of need; however they are not yet consistently providing actionable feedback to inform the revision of curricular and instructional decisions across the curriculum to support effective decision making.
 - Although some teachers use "Think/Pair/Share", teachers inconsistent use of varied on-going checks for understanding throughout lessons limits their ability to gather information needed to make "on the spot" adjustments ensuring they are meeting all students' learning needs. Further, limited opportunities for students to self-assess hampers their awareness of next learning steps.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Teachers Preparatory High School	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 as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			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, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?			X	
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students' progress toward school and class expectations?		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 staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?			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, guidance/advisement 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, with particular attention to the CCLS?			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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