

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**Antonia Pantoja Preparatory Academy,
A College Board School**

Junior High-High School X376

**1980 Lafayette Avenue
Bronx, NY 10473**

Principal: Nancy Diaz

Dates of review: March 7-8, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Eve Bois

Associate Reviewer: Wynta Nivens

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Antonia Pantoja Preparatory Academy, A College Board School is a Junior High-High School with 372 students from grade 6 through grade 9. The school population comprises 29% Black, 65% Hispanic, 1% White, 4% Asian students and 1% other students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 25% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 93%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Teaching practices reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and lead to consistently differentiated learning experiences that increase student engagement and learning. (1.2)
 - Faculty design lessons using the workshop method and use a conferencing model to plan lessons that support individual students' needs. Differentiation in classrooms includes the use of technology as an instructional tool, student groupings based on skill level as determined by individual student and subgroup data, and varied resources such as diversified classroom libraries and student/teacher selected learning goals. In an ELA classroom, signs hanging from the ceiling indicate different student groupings such as "Enrichment Group," "Independent Group," and "Guided Practice," to which students are assigned during tasks based on their skill level. A student explained that the teachers tell them which group to join, but that they can move in and out of other groups depending on their needs, and that the movement occurs after a conference with a teacher. In another class, co-teachers take turns leading instruction and check in with individual students during mini-conferences, which provide opportunities to support struggling and advanced students. As a result, students have multiple opportunities to engage with the lessons, which lead to more on-task behaviors and completed work products.
- The principal's strong commitment to student success is evident in the thoughtful (and continually assessed) use of resources and teacher time aligned to the school's instructional goals that accelerate learning outcomes. (1.3)
 - Teachers meet weekly in Professional Learning Communities (PLC) to examine student work, analyze data and student progress, and discuss research-based best practices and strategies. The consistent feedback loop resulting from the PLC meetings enables teachers to test the effectiveness of their instructional decisions, and make adjustments where necessary to maximize student outcomes.
 - The principal schedules common planning time and interest-based professional development which promotes collaboration among teachers and the exchange of best practices. She strategically schedules teachers who have had measurable success with a particular cohort of students to continue working with those students as they advance in grade level. This effectively addresses students' academic and social needs, as measured by improvements in student performance and behavior.
- The school routinely analyzes formative and summative information to identify areas of need in student performance in order to review, evaluate, and modify curriculum and instruction to support growth. (2.2)

- Departmental teams use common assessments, in conjunction with an analysis of comprehensive data that includes results from students' performance on formative assessments from grade three to their current grade, to gain a clear picture of their baseline skills and knowledge. Subsequently, they use assessment tools including Wizard, EdWare, Appleseeds, EndGrade, Ed Helper/Ed Performance, and Regents exams to create midterm and ongoing assessments. As a result, teachers identify gaps and re-teach particular aspects of the curriculum, thus solidifying learning.
- Through careful evaluation and consideration of classroom level assessment data, teachers identify the needs of student subgroups and make strategic decisions about curriculum and student placement. One PLC analyzed Algebra Regents scores, baseline, and interim testing and concluded that about half the students in a Geometry class were not prepared with sufficient skills to do the course work. The teachers reassigned the students to an Algebra class and co-teach so that the students received targeted instruction. As a result, there has been a marked increase in student completion of homework and class work, as well as in the number of students who receive passing grades.
- The school has established ongoing systems for monitoring teaching practice which support the attainment of school-wide goals and provide a clear focus on improving instruction. (4.1)
 - The principal and her cabinet conduct daily informal and monthly formal observations aligned to a variation of the Danielson rubric. The observation cycle includes a newly implemented self-reflection template for teachers, which encourages them to reflect on practice and professionalism as it pertains to the larger school wide goals. Additionally, the principal and her cabinet design multiple rubrics for observing specific aspects of instruction, including student notebook maintenance, classroom environment, lesson planning, and best practices. These area-specific rubrics provide another layer of detailed feedback that strategically raises the level of teacher effectiveness.
 - The principal and her cabinet provide targeted and differentiated guidance to teachers based on their understanding of teachers' needs. One AP chose a two-tiered approach to goal setting that helped make the process less overwhelming. She introduced and modeled the concept of SMART goals prior to leading teachers through the development of their own personal and professional goals. Another AP used student data to help teachers identify areas for instructional growth. Outcomes include teachers' increased understanding of instruction and student performance.
- The school is a safe place where students engage in learning and appreciate the support they receive for their personal and academic development. (1.4)
 - Both school leaders and staff cultivate an environment in which students feel safe and known by at least one adult in the building. Many students say that the principal is the adult who knows them best, and spoke enthusiastically about her accessibility and support. A 10th grader stated "This is a place to fulfill your dreams" and described how the principal

organized an “exciting” spirit week at the request of the students. Other students describe how their teachers “go out of their way” to tutor them at lunch and after school upon request. Two students spoke of one teacher’s use of “productive struggle,” a strategy that encourages them to problem solve collaboratively with limited teacher assistance. The students described how setting SMART goals across the content areas that target their individual academic or social emotional needs enable them to monitor their own progress in a given area. Consequently, these aspects of the school environment result in an increase in students’ sense of empowerment, confidence, and ownership of their learning, which leads to measurable academic and personal gains as evidenced in students’ attainment of their individual SMART goals, as well as progress on Periodic Assessments.

- The school engages internal and external supports that have a positive impact on students’ social, emotional, and academic development. (4.4)
 - Through its internal and external partnerships, the school addresses key areas of students’ academic and social success, in particular, college readiness and cultural awareness. The school engages the YMCA, the College Board, and Hostos Community College to provide students with access to college preparation programs and opportunities that raise student interest in their future while providing a clear pathway to postsecondary opportunities. Spanish students have visited the Dominican Republic as a way to connect with and validate their heritage. Through extensive professional development provided by both school leaders and the network, staff utilize incentive programs for students (via a school store), Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), administer interest and career surveys to students, and assist them as they take responsibility for their own preparations for the future. As a result, the school environment both celebrates and supports students’ social emotional and academic achievements.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to communicate clear and well-supported expectations for teachers to deliver rigorous curriculum and academic tasks that support higher order thinking for all students. (1.1)
 - The school implements a variety of curriculum programs and instructional strategies aligned with Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), such as America’s Choice/100 Book Challenge, in addition to focused support from the Network around aligning CCLS with Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals as well as ELA and math curricula. However, work and classroom discussions that support higher order thinking is not consistent across all grades, thus limiting the opportunity to challenge all learners.
 - Although a school wide emphasis on employing higher level questioning across the curriculum leads to focused professional development around the Depth of Knowledge (DoK), it is not consistently implemented across all content areas. For example, in English language arts (ELA) students practice higher level questioning through “reciprocal teaching.” This strategy engages them in a metacognitive understanding of the types of questions they ask so that they expand their interaction with academic

content, thus deepening their understanding of what they learn. However, this type of higher order thinking practice is not utilized by all teachers, across all subject areas, thus limiting students' development of the college readiness skills and knowledge the school aims to foster in all students, including English language learners and special education students.

- Initiate consistent, systems for communicating progress to families to better enable them to collaborate with the school to support student learning. (2.4)
 - The school uses progress reports, 100 Book Challenge home reading tasks, report cards, emails and phone calls to share information with families. However, parents cited that the new online data system is inconsistently populated and not readily accessible and that the previous data system wasn't used across the board by all teachers and therefore provided uneven data about student's individual performance. As a result, some parents have an unclear or inconsistent message about the supports available to them, thus minimizing their ability to support their children's progress.
- Ensure that all constituent groups are involved in consistently setting data based goals that include higher levels of challenge in order to accelerate student progress. (3.2)
 - Although most teachers use a wide range of data and collaborative processes to set learning goals for students, the recent shift to a new data collection system (Skedula) has led to uneven data management and accessibility. Some teachers say they prefer to use other data sources such as Acuity, because they find the new system cumbersome and "unnecessary." The inconsistent adoption of Skedula hampers the school's ability to build a common tool for data management that enables teachers to meet the varied needs of individual and groups of students.
 - The school is in the process of systemizing successful inquiry team work so it becomes a model for how to analyze data to isolate subgroups and accelerate their learning. In the absence of a system aligned to successful data analysis, teachers' ability to target specific goals for students aligned to the curriculum varies across classrooms, thus impacting their ability to support students' next learning steps.
- Expand to all content areas the existing practice of collaboration and intervisitation among teacher teams to examine student work and plan with the intent of adjusting instructional decisions that improve student learning. (4.2)
 - Groups of teachers collaborate on teams to examine student work and distributive leadership structures are in place. However, efforts focus largely on ELA and Math, which leads to more pronounced gains in these content areas as opposed to science and history. The lack of established teams in all subject areas limits opportunities for teachers to review work of students they share and hinders school wide coherence to leverage inquiry team work to develop a comprehensive understanding of the specific needs of individual students and groups of students.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Antonia Pantoja Preparatory Academy, A College Board 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