

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**New Explorers High School
High school X547**

**730 CONCOURSE VILLAGE WEST
BRONX
NY 10451**

Principal: JACOB HOBSON

**Dates of review: January 5-6, 2012
Lead Reviewer: Geri Taylor Brown**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

New Explorers High School is a High School with 351 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 28% Black, 66% Hispanic, 0% White,)% Asian students and 3% other students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 – 2012 was 83.2%

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school is developing curricula that highlight specific skills aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and offers varied learning opportunities for students to support academic growth. (1.1)
 - Last spring, the faculty began writing curricula aligned with the CCLS focusing on “argumentative writing.” Under the guidance of consultant specialists, teachers were trained in linking the focus of this standard with varied tasks that move student thinking. This was evidenced in some of the lesson “Aims” that were written on the classroom SMARTboards. For example an English language arts (ELA) class asked: “How do people define themselves?” While students in a Social Studies class pondered the answer to “the effects of colonization in India.” In addition, some teachers vary how students fulfill tasks requirements. The lesson template developed by the ELA teachers, includes the opportunity for students to produce written, verbal and/or tactile work products to show mastery. Results from the beginning initiations of these interventions show slight progress in some academic areas according to the marking period scholarship reports.
- The principal uses resources to implement successful research-based interventions that improve academic outcomes. (1.3)
 - The principal designated fiscal funds and resources to support student learning. The purchase of programs, such as Achieve 3000, and the hiring of two new Assistant Principals, new teachers, requiring two periods of literacy for 9th graders and a designated College Advisor are amongst the initiatives he has begun. As a result students now agree with their classmate who stated that New Explorers “Helps you develop a career after you finish school.”
 - The school rearranged student and teacher programming to specifically include teacher team meeting time. Teacher teams now meet three times a week: grade team meeting, content team meeting and a “Kid Talk” meeting, where teachers stated, “We discuss student behavior.” Thus far the short-term influence of these interventions is student behavior that continues to improve as students find that their classwork is more interesting. Students agree that in class, “The challenge is good and not extremely overwhelming.”
- Staff members work cooperatively to provide a respectful and orderly school climate that supports student and adult learning. (1.4)
 - Students, parents and staff agree that there have been significant improvements in school tone and climate. This is evidenced through the increased number of participants and the improved scoring in the school’s NYC School Survey Report. This reputation for being a safe school environment is known in the community and has influenced school enrollment. Consequently, over 850 students applied for a little over 100 seats.
 - The school sponsored an orientation for all four grades. Over 75% of 9th grade student, and over 40% of upper grade students attended these orientation sessions where they “looked at the student Handbook” and were informed about the “new culture.” In addition there have been two school-wide “Town Hall” meetings to continue to support the social growth of students. As a result, the principal states that “cutting is

not an issue now.” He continued, “Maybe what is going on in the classroom is more interesting.”

- Teams of teachers examine assessment data to plan instruction that meets student learning needs and impacts student achievement. (2.2)
 - Teachers have recently begun to work jointly, by content, developing common assessments to get a good sense of student learning. Teachers agreed with their colleague who stated that focusing on the skills required to “write an argumentative essay” has helped him “focus on using a wider range of different instructional strategies.” Many teachers also utilize similar strategies to find out if students are clear about daily lessons. For example, some teachers utilized “exit tickets” to find out if the “kids really got it.” Other teachers regrouped student seating into “weaker and stronger students” in an effort to pinpoint instruction to enhance student learning strengths and improve learning weaknesses. As a result, students have noted that they have “more organized notes”, are “better prepared” and have more “hands-on” lessons.
- The school has implemented effective youth development services that support academic and personal growth for all students. (4.4)
 - The school has formed a staff team consisting of the guidance counselor, social worker and other pupil personnel staff members. These support staff professionals meet daily to review concerns about students. They also participate with other staff members every Tuesday in the “Kid Talk” meetings. During these meetings staff members share concerns and develop interventions to support students’ in their personal growth. School-wide emphasis on ensuring respect for all is evidenced in the school’s fall newsletter where “Student Voice Reporters” wrote articles to help students deal with bullying, avoid cigarette smoking, and make healthy and wise food choices at fast food restaurants. In addition, the school has chosen to work with a new community based organization (CBO), Eastside House, which works collaboratively with school staff in coordinating Saturday home visits. These interventions have impacted student attendance and moved the student focus beyond high school graduation to college. As one student stated, “New Explorers High School opens doors to where you want to go in life.”

What the school needs to improve

- Develop a school-wide understanding of differentiated instruction to build a common instructional view of effective teaching that improves academic achievement. (1.2)
 - Teachers have begun to use more varied instructional strategies in some classrooms. However, this usage is not used across all classrooms nor is it consistently used in the same class. As a result, gains in student achievement vary greatly from class to class. In addition, classroom visits evidenced little variation in student activities and did not consistently show tasks that were engaging and resulted in work products that truly exemplified mastery. For example, students working on different “work sheets” during visits to both a science and a math class was touted as “differentiated instruction.” Tasks of this limited nature lessen students’ academic growth.
- Establish clear goals that are strongly linked with school data, cooperatively developed by multiple stakeholders and are the focal point of all student growth. (3.1)
 - All school stakeholders are keenly aware of the general goal to graduate all students from high school. However, there is a lack of clarity about the data driven goals that are

specific to this school. Students, staff and parents varied in their understanding of where the school should be headed academically. Students referenced more short-term goals such as being “on-time for school.” Parents spoke about the need for more “programs”, and teachers focused on improving “passing” percentage rates. This gap in conveying specific information about required growth in specific areas has resulted in a lack of urgency to improve areas of need. Thus, there is not yet steady and consistent academic improvement.

- Strengthen teacher pedagogy through the use of classroom observations that connect improved learning outcomes with improved instructional practices. (4.1)
 - This year school leaders began the practice of implementing the Danielson Teacher Framework (DTF). This practice has not yet reached the depth or breadth of regularity nor does it yet have the richness of effective feedback to fully move instruction. As a result, there is not yet been overall improvement in the delivery of instruction that impacts student learning.
 - All teachers have received at least one “snap shot” observation and administrators have performed “walkthroughs”. Both tools have provided school leaders with evaluative information for the supervision of teachers. However, there is not yet a firm system or structure to directly link this information with student data. Thus, teachers’ growth has not yet been sufficiently impacted to prepare students for career and college readiness skills.
- Create an effective parent outreach plan to fully engage parents in the academic success of their children and the overall growth of the school. (2.4)
 - The principal has stated that the effective outreach to parents is “a work in progress.” This sentiment was also echoed by parents who agree with one Mother who stated, “We need to copycat other schools “ who have had “a success rate with parent involvement.” The school offers training workshops in ARIS and recently had a “Financial Aid Night.” There has been outreach to recruit parents for leadership positions on the PTA and SLT. However, parent participation numbers remain extremely low. The school continues to work on developing plans to engage parents. But currently the lack of parental involvement impedes any meaningful exchange of information and ideas between parents and the school. In addition it prevents the school from full immersion in the community to support student growth.
- Establish a firm system for measuring progress towards long and short-term goals so that timely adjustments are made to ensure continued student growth and progress. (5.3)
 - School leaders have begun to take a closer look at student data by examining grades for each marking period and other formative and summative assessment data. However, the school has not yet established a clear system to establish both interim and long-range goals and properly measure growth towards meeting these goals. In addition, although the principal has indicated that the “cabinet looked at areas of need”, there is not yet a confirmed way that personnel determine the next steps in moving the school forward. Faculty has not yet been sufficiently trained in deepening their examination and analysis of student data as evidenced during teacher team meetings, where teacher review of student work resulted in comments regarding student behavioral changes. Thus, the school is still not able to establish and maintain steady and even academic growth to close the achievement gap.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: New Explorers 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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