

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Esperanza Preparatory Academy

Middle- High School M372

**240 East 109th Street
New York 10029**

Principal: Alexandra Estrella

Dates of review: January 10- 11, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Luz T. Cortazzo

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Esperanza Preparatory Academy is a middle high school with 348 students from 6 through grade 9. 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 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 84.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school offers its scholars a standards aligned curriculum with challenging and refined tasks, embedded across all content areas, which drives academic achievement for all students. (1.1)
 - Higher order skills are continually pushed in all classes via the Socratic questioning and project-based learning structures that are embedded across curricula. As a result, the vast majority of students are beginning to fair well on their open-ended writing component on their interim assessments. For instance, all scholars are engaged in dialogue, responding to each other's thoughts and ideas with questions, instead of just responding with the “right” answers. Consequently, scholars are rapidly becoming divergent thinkers rather than convergent thinkers.
 - Throughout the school year, teacher teams meet every five weeks to critically analyze the degree of challenge of projects, other common assessments, and their alignment with the taught curricula. Based on the outcomes of authentic student work, staff consequently adjusts the resources, practices, and/or assessments, for example the math department, model tasks using the Engage New York tool by breaking down each unit of study with power standards and exemplars that teachers are able to use in order to incorporate and design tasks in the classroom. Thus, ensuring rigor for all student sub-groups, including those with individualized education plans.
- The principal makes informed and strategic organizational decisions across all aspects of the school to support improvements in scholars' learning. (1.3)
 - The school's plan to ensure mastery of technology includes a big investment to infuse technology in the classroom from online reading and writing programs with staff to support integration. Grade six students receive free desktops, internet access and technical support, resulting in high interest and excitement levels across classrooms. When a review of incoming six graders' writing revealed deficiencies in producing a cohesive essay with a well-developed main idea and evidence of supporting arguments in their writing, school leaders decided to intensively infuse writing across all content areas. Comparisons with baseline data reveal progress in students' writing with supporting evidence, which equip all students with the tools necessary for college readiness.
 - Teacher and student time is structured to respond to the learning needs of all students observed daily during individual and group work. Teachers regularly collaborate during scheduled Friday whole staff meetings, weekly grade level meetings, mixed grade department meetings and inquiry team meetings to help each other in improving their instructional practice. Teachers develop common core-aligned units of study that incorporate opportunities for students to conduct research and use supportive evidence, which give students the tools necessary for college readiness standards based instructional focus. A review of data from the

first interim assessment revealed that the majority of the students across the grade had difficulty with questions that required identification of primary sources. Consequently, grade six teachers were strategically matched with specific small groups of students during the day. Each teacher was responsible for a targeted student group. As a result students performed better on their second interim assessment leading to student achievement.

- The school provides a safe, caring and supportive environment where adults coordinate support to impact scholars' academic growth. (1.4)
 - The school provides students with opportunities to actively participate in activities such as; Town Hall, school advisory, scholar led conferences, Socratic Circles and the school leadership team. This allows students a voice in shaping school wide decisions, promotes college readiness, and bolsters their self esteem, along with the development of their leadership skills. The student government raised money to support teen suicide prevention, autism awareness, breast cancer and other initiatives. Input from the student government resulted in scholars participating in 100 hours of community service. Additionally, the school's advisory program enables every student to be well known by staff that helps support their academic and social growth. Students and parents appreciate that they can turn to teachers and members of the pupil personnel team to help resolve personal issues and concerns that interfere with their learning. As a result, students report that they "feel safe' and are able to focus more on their academic development.
- Assessment practices help identify student performance and progress so that instructional supports are designed to improve academic outcomes. (2.2)
 - In addition to common rubrics and student conferences, grade level and department teams also create common assessments, which are administered school-wide every five weeks. Immediately following an analysis of the assessments, teachers utilize results to focus on the areas of improvement during a school wide re-teaching week. During this week, instruction is differentiated for students based on the results of the interim assessment to afford scholars the greatest opportunity for success. Teachers also complete a data analysis and a 6-8 week plan, which consists of general and isolated interventions for standards and skills in which students still need improvement. Teachers across grades and content areas are involved in a work sampling pilot, whereby specific data is collected on five students across domains. Staff is asked to reflect on the data, via a written reflection presented to the principal. This process leads to revisions of specific areas in the curricula in order to align with citywide expectations in literacy and math, with an emphasis on evidence from the text in literacy and conceptual understandings in math. Consequently, identified gaps are re-taught aligned to particular aspects of the curriculum in order to solidify learning for all students.
 - Teacher teams organize and review assorted streams of data including student work products, running records, predictive assessments, item skills analysis and benchmark exams in every content area. With the help of consultants, technology integrated programs allow teachers to design individualized learning paths for students based on their learning

goals. A school-wide structure of giving interim assessments across all content areas every six weeks, provide teachers with immediate access to real time assessment data to swiftly make instructional adaptations. Teachers develop intervention clinics for students who are then reassessed every six to eight weeks to note gains. Additionally, all subject-based teachers assemble data binders to track the progress of specific students as well as students in the lowest third, resulting in targeted supplemental support during the school day and small group tutoring. This strategic support leads to achievement gains of these students as noted on formative assessment tracking logs.

- Feedback from school leaders includes clear next steps to improve teacher practice and raise levels of scholar achievement. (4.1)
 - The principal and assistant principal visit classrooms daily so that all teachers receive frequent feedback aligned to a research-based framework on the effectiveness of their teaching, to support student outcomes. Most of the feedback is communicated immediately through private meetings between the administrator and teacher where the two speak to the classroom snapshot, coupled with student work and data. As a result, both novice and experienced teachers are strengthening their self-chosen goals. There is an anticipated understanding that each teacher can expect an estimated minimum of five written support reports aligned with the Danielson framework throughout the year. Several templates have been developed and utilized to validate each teacher's strengths and promote clear next steps with regard to designing coherent instruction, using assessments in instruction, as well as using questioning and discussion techniques effectively. Consequently, the principal has begun using this informal data, coupled with student work on the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) aligned tasks and on challenges and successes related to all students, including those with individualized plans and English language learners (ELLs). This data informs decisions for targeted professional development plans for teachers in need of support.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase the use of school wide teaching strategies aligned to students' needs, in order to support the development of critical thinking skills for all students. (1.2)
 - Most teachers prepare lessons that target the specific needs and strengths of students and employ differentiated strategies that address a wide range of student ability levels. However, this is not a practice in every class, therefore not all students receive the academic support to accelerate their learning. Additionally, while data based flexible grouping for instruction is evident across classrooms, not all teachers consistently use scaffolds that demonstrate sufficient student engagement in higher order thinking so that meaningful work products demonstrate extension activities that stretch the thinking of higher achieving students, as evidenced in student work products.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Esperanza Preparatory Academy	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score				X			
Instructional Core							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, including the arts, physical and health education, 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 that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to curricula, engaging and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?			X				
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels?				X			
School Culture							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X			
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?				X			
Systems for Improvement							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet students' learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?				X			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?				X			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework 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				
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?				X			
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed