



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Teachers Preparatory School

High School K697

**226 Bristol Street
Brooklyn
NY 11212**

Principal: Carmen Simon

**Date of review: February 12, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Richard Cintron**

The School Context

Teachers Preparatory School is a middle-high school with 458 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 85% Black, 14% Hispanic, and 1% White. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 36% of the students enrolled and girls account for 64%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 84.0%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards	Focus	Developing
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	Additional Findings	Developing
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	Additional Findings	Proficient
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Additional Findings	Proficient
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Celebration	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based collaborations that promote student achievement and strengthen teacher practice. Distributed leadership structures allow teachers to have a voice in key decisions across the school.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has strengthened teacher collaboration resulting in improvements to pedagogical practices and a stronger voice in key decisions affecting supports for student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet twice a week for three cycles during the year to study student work, and share best strategies to improve their practice. Cycle one addresses challenges identified from baseline assessments administered at the beginning of the year. The work of the teams in cycle two and three reflects student growth or lack of progress from cycle one. For example, the English language arts team that originally focused on textual analysis now has moved to developing counter claims, while the social studies team is continuing their work on students using evidence to support a claim. Teachers spoke to how the sharing of best practices has helped develop a common language by teachers and students, evidenced across all classrooms. For example, a strategy called RACE, which stands for restate the question, answer the task, cite evidence, and explain, is now used in the large majority of classrooms to help students respond to constructed response questions.
- At an English language arts teacher team meeting, teachers examined student work from a tenth grade assessment, looked for specific evidence of students writing a counter-claim and then discussed similarities and differences they were observing in the papers in front of them as well as across their classes. Teachers then decided that they would implement three common strategies across all classrooms from grades 8 through 12; using graphic organizers, exposing students to more model papers at all levels, and creating transitional phrases for students to use. Teachers then began a discussion for how they would organize their time so intervisitations occur on a regular basis to watch each other use these strategies in their classrooms.
- Teachers spoke about how they have a strong voice in school-wide instructional decisions and their leadership is valued. For example, teachers explained how the math department has modelled a new intervisitation process that will be completely teacher driven and managed by teacher leaders. Teachers spoke to how teacher leaders meet once a week with the administration to discuss changes to professional development and how student support services are driven by data generated during teacher team meetings and at the end of teacher team cycles.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Curricula and academic tasks do not consistently emphasize rigorous higher order thinking skills across all grades and subjects areas. Curricula and tasks do not consistently reflect planning to provide access for all students.

Impact

All students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, are not consistently challenged with high-level tasks that push student thinking and promote college and career readiness nor are they provided with the necessary supports to access those tasks limiting college and career readiness for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Lesson plans are inconsistently written to cognitively engage learners and challenge them with higher order tasks. While most lesson plans did include objectives related to Common Core Learning Standards that teachers were planning to address, summative tasks were not always aligned. For example, in a math class, although the lesson plan read that students would be able to factor out the greatest common factor, use grouping to interpret expressions, and apply these strategies to real world situation, the summary assessment only asked students to explain what is the first thing they should do when factoring. In a social studies class, although the lesson plan read that students would be able to identify the major components of feudalism, analyze the impact during the middle ages, and compare and contrast feudalism in western Europe and Japan, the summary assessment asked students to compare feudalism to any system that existed in the United States from the early 1800s to the present.
- A review of curricula documents revealed that targeted supports for students who struggle are not always specific nor are they consistently planned for in all subject areas. For example, a review of an English language arts unit plan and a Language other than English unit plan revealed no planning throughout the unit to support struggling students, English language learners or students with disabilities. A review of a United States history unit as well as a Participation in Government unit revealed that supports for students who struggle, English language learners, and students with disabilities, were exactly the same in every unit regardless of the content and assessments. A review of two social studies lesson plans as well as a math lesson plan also did not indicate any intentional planning to support struggling students, English language learners, or students with disabilities.
- Although department teacher teams have identified specific instructional foci, such as students developing counter claims in English language arts classes; students focusing on constructive response questions in math; students developing claims in social studies; and students using data from graphs, charts, and texts, to defend their answers in science, a review of curricula documents showed inconsistent and limited evidence of purposeful planning of instructional strategies and assessments regarding these focus areas.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently provide entry points into the lesson. Student discussions reflect uneven levels of student understanding.

Impact

Uneven student engagement curtailed opportunities to promote higher order thinking and rigorous participation for all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, hindering them from exhibiting their work at high levels and demonstrating their understanding.

Supporting Evidence

- When asked, students' understanding of the material being covered varied across classrooms leaving some students unable to articulate what they were learning and why it was important. In a social studies class where students were learning about the Neolithic Revolution, students could not explain why they were learning about the topic and how they would be using this information in future lessons. In a math class where students were learning about dilation, although some students could clearly articulate why they were learning this material and how they could use it in a real world scenario such as building a house, other students simply responded that they believed it was going to be on a test at some point.
- Teaching strategies to provide multiple entry points such as the identification of key vocabulary words, purposeful grouping, and limiting the number of tasks all students had to complete while maintaining the same rigor, were seen in some classes, but not consistently across all classrooms. Thus, some students were not engaged with the material. For example, in a social studies class where students were studying feudalism, although students were working in groups, when the teacher posed a question to the class regarding interactions between a king and a peasant, student's answers indicated that they did not fully understand the true nature of the feudal structure and under what circumstances various relationships would exist and how each social group interacted with each other.
- During classroom visits some teachers asked only low level recall questions that did not require students to strategically think or extend their thinking. For example, in a social studies class, students were asked to read a text and identify any words with which they were having trouble. When a student identified a specific word, instead of asking the student or the entire class questions about how they might determine the definition of the word, the teacher asked if anyone knew the definition of the word and then repeated the student's answer to the class and moved on to the next student and proceeded with the same process.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across the school teachers use common assessments to track student progress and make adjustments to curricula. Teacher's assessment practices regularly include the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

The school's use of common assessments, data analysis, and feedback, allows teachers to determine student progress toward goals and adjust curricula and instruction accordingly to meet the needs of all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The school administers common baseline assessments at the beginning of the year as well as common end-of-unit exams, common mid-term exams, and common mid-year benchmark assessments. Results are used to adjust curricula across all content areas through teacher created "re-teaching tools" which are six week plans submitted to the administration identifying the top three skills that students struggled with, why teachers believe they struggled, and a plan for how these skills will be retaught in the spring semester. For example, an eleventh grade United States history re-teaching tool identified citing text based evidence to support analysis of documents as a skill in need of support, the belief that students lacked sufficient vocabulary development as a reason why they struggled with understanding the documents, and teachers using a variety of documents at various reading levels to help students access the tasks as a possible plan to support students.
- In some classrooms observed, teachers consistently used a variety of methods to check for understanding, such as, exit slips, one-on-one conferencing with students or groups, and questioning techniques. Furthermore, teachers adjust lesson delivery so that students are provided with strategies to help them progress through the task. For example, in a math class, the teacher continuously moved from group to group checking to see if all students were on task and if they fully understood the task. When students appeared to be hesitating or looking at other students in the group, the teacher asked someone from the group to help or guide the student in the right direction with a question rather than provide the answer.
- In classrooms observed, students regularly peer- and self-assessed their work as they progressed through tasks. In an English language arts class, as groups of students discussed examples of suspense from the text that they just read, whenever a student provided an example, another student would remind them to also provide accompanying evidence to justify their answer. In a math class, students peer-assessed their partners work and then discussed the feedback asking each other questions such as; "Do you understand why your first answer was incorrect?" and ""Can you explain the new answer back to me now that you understand it fully?". During the student meeting, students also spoke to how they regularly work together in groups or pairs and provide each other with verbal and written feedback to help push each other's thinking and develop a stronger understanding of material covered in class.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

High expectations are consistently communicated to the staff via the use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, during professional development, and through other forms of communication. Leadership and staff successfully communicate expectations connected to college and career readiness with families to support student progress.

Impact

Collaboration and support among staff, students, and families, foster high expectations for all and prepares students for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal met with all teachers individually at the beginning of the year to discuss observation data from last year, summer reflections, and classroom expectations for this year. The school's professional development calendar revealed support for new teachers around setting professional goals and planning for cultural relevance in their lessons. All classroom observation conversations include discussions and analysis of student work and discussions on how all students can achieve.
- Part of the work of teachers during time devoted to parent engagement includes regular contact with parents regarding student progress. Teachers regularly provide updates to parents about attendance, homework, upcoming exams and trips, discipline, and curriculum. Parents receive regular messages and can communicate with teachers whenever they have questions or concerns. Parent workshops designed to help them support their children at home included topics such as graduation requirements, financial aid for college, and expectations for core subject classes. Parent specifically mentioned how understanding the expectations for all core classes has helped them to have a better understanding of the classes their children should be taking each year and how to best support them in those classes that they are struggling with. Parents also spoke to how the study guides that are sent home by teachers allow them to work with their children to prepare for exams well in advance.
- Students and parents spoke to how teachers are always encouraging students to push themselves and are helping to expose students to the best possible college and career options after graduation. Students spoke to how they regularly visit colleges and have guest speakers come to the school during open houses to discuss post-graduation options. The school's college counselor works very closely with students and parents so that they understand the entire college application process. Students and parents also spoke to how the school does a number of little things to always ensure that college is always on every students mind. An example spoken about during the parent meeting was how all staff members have identified which colleges they have attended and created signs that have been displayed outside of their offices and classrooms urging parents and students to come ask them about their experiences at those schools. Students commented that they had never heard of some of the colleges displayed on the signs and it motivated them to find out more about these schools after they spoke to their teachers.