



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Lower East Side Preparatory

High School M515

**145 Stanton Street
Manhattan
NY 10002**

Principal: Martha Polin

**Date of review: December 5, 2014
Reviewer: Eva Ostrum**

The School Context

Lower East Side Preparatory is a high school with 551 students from grade 10 through grade 12. The school population comprises 9% Black, 20% Hispanic, 1% White, and 69% Asian students. The student body includes 74% English language learners and 2% special education students. Boys account for 57% of the students enrolled and girls account for 43%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 88.3%.

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	Additional Findings	Well Developed
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	Focus	Proficient
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	Well Developed
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	Well Developed
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	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The vast majority of teachers engage in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations that have strengthened teacher instructional capacity and promoted the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards (including the instructional shifts), resulting in school-wide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all learners. Distributive leadership functions promote teacher leadership.

Impact

Ongoing professional inquiry promotes a student-centered approach to curricula development and data-driven decision making. A distributive leadership structure builds leadership capacity and ensures that teachers have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers are engaged in ongoing inquiry work through his/her Design for Learning Professional Learning Community (PLC). Each PLC conducts four-week inquiry cycles aligned to a school-wide designated theme, such as student engagement. The four-week cycle begins with each team reading a relevant article, followed by a discussion in which participants use a National School Reform Faculty (NSRF) protocol. The team then collaboratively designs a lesson plan that one teacher on the team agrees to teach. The team uses a tuning protocol to collaboratively examine student work that from the lesson. Finally, teacher teams come together as a whole faculty to share, debrief, and document professional learning.
- The Design for Learning cycle of inquiry frequently results in team members looking at a videotape of the teacher implementing a lesson or in classroom inter-visitations. Teachers also look at student work in department meetings, during which time they discuss individual students, and how they might implement instructional to support them.
- The school embeds distributive leadership structures into its practice, as evidenced by the participation of the UFT Teacher Center Coordinator on the school leadership team and the degree to which the responsibility for designing and implementing professional development is shared by teachers.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts. Teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points for diverse learners so that most students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, engage in challenging tasks. However, teachers do not always plan for learning extensions to provide high-achieving students with appropriate rigor and challenge.

Impact

Coherent teaching practice ensures that diverse learners have access to rigorous teaching and learning, and that the majority of learners demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in student work products. However, high-achieving students are not always engaged in suitable learning extensions, hindering their progress.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to a belief in an emphasis on cooperative learning and on speaking and listening standards to improve the language skills of English language learners while they learn content. For example, in an English language arts class, members of student groups planned to perform the work for absent students so that the task could continue without interruption. In a science class, students worked in cooperative groups on a lab on which the majority made notable progress during the course of the lesson.
- Bilingual classes reflected a fluid use of both languages (in this case, Mandarin and English) to ensure student comprehension while simultaneously strengthening student English language skills. This was observed in both a social studies and a science class.
- Across classrooms, teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula so that the majority of learners engage in appropriately challenging tasks. For example, both an English language arts and a science teacher made strategic student grouping decisions to differentiate access to the lesson for struggling learners. However, teaching strategies did not always address the needs of students performing at a higher level of academic proficiency. For example, in a United States history class, the teacher circulated around the room and repeatedly summarized the Supreme Court case on which the students were focusing, rather than providing tools and strategies for some students to do this work for themselves.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks consistently plan for a high level of rigor across grades and content areas.

Impact

Instructional coherence promotes college and career readiness for all students and ensures that all learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities, must demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- The school participated in the Common Core Lab Sites pilot, and has engaged in an ongoing process of refining curricula to align with the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Implementation of the Common Core and the instructional shifts was visible in classes serving students at every level of English language acquisition. For example, intermediate level English language learners engaged in a task that asked them to make a claim, support it with evidence, and engage with peers who had made an alternative claim to discuss the merits of their arguments. Students in a Regents-level English language arts class were reading *The Glass Menagerie* and developing character analyses based on a close reading of the text.
- Unit plans focus increasingly on college readiness skills as English level improves. For example, in a level five English as a second language class, students had graphic organizers to support them in taking notes on podcasts. Student work also reflects that students are encouraged to take margin notes when reading informational text.
- Academic tasks in lesson plans reflect coherence in emphasizing rigor across grades and subject areas. For example, a lesson in an ESL class focused on drafting the concluding paragraph of an essay and included a handout with transition words to assist English language learners. A lesson for a group of students learning English as a second language planned for the use of curricular materials to ensure that special education students in the class demonstrated their thinking. Teachers spoke about collaboratively developing curricula to embed a high level of rigor for all students.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers create and use assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula and offer a clear portrait of student mastery, thus providing actionable and meaningful feedback on student achievement to both students and teachers. In addition, the school uses common assessments to determine student progress towards goals across grades and subject areas and the results are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Impact

Students and teachers have an ongoing current understanding of where students need to improve and how teachers need to adjust curriculum and instruction to facilitate those improvements. The result is that all students benefit from an educational program tailored to their needs that prepares them for both college and career.

Supporting Evidence

- Tasks and rubrics reflect an iterative cycle of communication between teachers and students as students revise their work to attain a college and career-ready standard. For example, in a global history class, students had the opportunity to rewrite a document-based essay. Specific feedback from the teacher, via a rubric and comments in both English and Spanish, identified specific areas on which students needed to focus their revisions. In a Living Environment class, students received specific, targeted comments on "things to improve," with details in both English and Mandarin, as well as additional feedback on a rubric that clearly outlined performance standards for the task.
- The school has developed a system of common assessments that it uses to create a clear picture of student progress toward goals. Teachers track progress by reviewing student work in their team meetings, and through using item skills analysis in Skedula. For example, school leaders stated that every department administers a common midterm and final. Midterms and finals mirror the format of the final assessment in each course. For example, the final in English as a second language resembles the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test. The final in Global History mimics the format of the Regents exam. Teachers use the results of these assessments to track student progress and to make curricular and instructional decisions that result in all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, demonstrating increased mastery, as evidenced in revised assignments and progress on formative and summative assessments.
- Teachers collaborate on developing common performance-based assessment tasks that connect to a common theme that they are exploring, such as academic vocabulary. They then use National School Reform Faculty protocols to examine student work, the results of which lead to a refinement of the task.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff, which they support with training and a system of accountability. The school effectively partners with students and parents around college and career readiness.

Impact

Systems of communication regarding high expectations, and aligned training result in a culture of mutual accountability. The school successfully partners with families to support student progress towards expectations, and guidance/advisement supports ensure that students, including high-needs sub-groups, own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- A Generation Ready consultant facilitates weekly professional development with teachers who select this support. Every faculty member engages in ongoing cycles of inquiry for which they hold themselves accountable. Staff members regularly suggest ideas for professional development, such as a workshop on embedding academic vocabulary in lessons. Those suggestions can then turn into an inquiry theme for teacher teams. Faculty members regularly attend professional conferences, such as one those for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages and those sponsored by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Teachers then turnkey what they learned to the rest of the staff.
- The school has a Teacher Center that provides an ongoing professional development resource for teachers. The Teacher Center Coordinator convenes professional learning book group discussions, provides individualized support to teachers, and supports the implementation of the Design for Learning teacher teams.
- Students and parents unanimously agreed that the school communicates regularly with them about college and career. Students spoke of college trips. Parents spoke about workshops on the college process. Students and parents also affirmed that the school communicates high expectations to students and families that then motivate students to achieve in ways they did not in their previous high schools. One family representative stated that three children in her family attended the school, and their interest level and performance in school improved after they transferred to the school. Another parent said that his child reads every day. Another parent said that the school continuously pushes her son to improve his English. Parent workshops and monthly Parent Association and School Leadership Team meetings are well attended. One parent stated, "The meetings are packed". Parents receive ongoing communication from the school about their children's achievements and progress via email, phone calls, through Skedula, and via notes home.