



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

**English Language Learners and International
Support Preparatory Academy (ELLIS)**

High School X397

**99 Terrace View Avenue
Bronx
NY 10463**

Principal: Norma Vega

**Date of review: November 24, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Rosemary Stuart**

The School Context

The English Language Learners and International Support Preparatory Academy (ELLIS) is a high school with 354 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 2% Asian, 16% Black, 79% Hispanic, and 3% White students. The student body includes 87% English Language Learners and 0% students with disabilities. Boys account for 58% of the students enrolled and girls account for 42%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 78.9%.

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	Proficient
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 <i>Framework for Teaching</i> , aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	Focus	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	Celebration	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	Additional Findings	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Teachers use and create assessments and rubrics that reflect the curricula and determine the progress students are making toward their goals.

Impact

Results of assessments give students actionable feedback on their achievement and are used to make adjustments to curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- In addition to passing the English and Integrated Algebra Regents examinations, students at this transfer high school, a member of the New York Performance Standards Consortium, must prepare and present five content portfolio performance assessments as well as a personal reflection and complete an internship.
- Students in their first and second years at this school are members of the Junior Institute (JI) and must complete a stepstone assessment in one of the major content areas (math, science, social studies, English) every eight weeks. Students in their third and fourth years are members of the Senior Institute (SI) and must complete a capstone assessment in five content areas in order to graduate. The capstone projects are presented as an oral defense of learning before a panel of teachers and educators. Teams of teachers in each institute analyze and track the progress students make every year toward completion of these required performance assessments. In addition, they determine the needed changes to unit and lesson plans, and tasks to meet the needs of their changing population of students.
- Four-point rubrics, adapted from the Internationals Network for Public Schools (INPS), for the capstone projects are used to provide feedback to students and include performance indicators such as, "Evaluates a significant event, background story, belief, or place" and note how well the student makes connections to the real world. In order to achieve the highest rating in mathematics, the student must be able to explain and justify all solutions and mathematical statements and to draw valid conclusions within a context.
- A student stated that the stepstone and capstone projects are difficult and take a lot of hard work to prepare but that in the process of preparing for them students learn how to create a bibliography and to formulate and defend a thesis. Students agreed that teachers provide them with the feedback and support they need to achieve success in completing graduation requirements.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Some teaching strategies provide entry points for different types of learners. Student work products do not consistently reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

Not all students are engaged in challenging tasks demonstrating higher order thinking skills.

Supporting Evidence

- Students were observed conducting a silent debate in small groups. In each group, one student wrote arguments supporting the claim that government assistance programs help people get out of poverty. Another student refuted this claim and provided written evidence to support the opposite position. A third student acted as the moderator, prompting students to write more evidence or reminding them that speaking was not allowed. A student stated that working in groups and respecting the cultural diversity of all students is part of the school culture and added that, "We build on each other's strength."
- In a science class, students were acting out the process by which atoms combine to form molecules. They used paper strips to illustrate the bonds that are formed during this chemical process. Students were highly engaged in the activity, but not all of them were able to explain how the properties of their own atoms allowed some bonds to be formed and prohibited others from forming.
- Students used photographs of factory workers from different countries to compare and contrast working conditions from the industrial revolution to the present in a social studies class. The lesson included explicit vocabulary development and opportunities for students to speak, explain, and provide evidence to support their claims.
- Students were provided texts at different reading levels to allow for diverse English language ability. One text included scaffolds to prompt students to make predictions or to use sentence starters such as, "Government programs help people by..." or "The biggest problem of welfare is..." Some students use online resources to provide translation support or classroom dictionaries in order to access the lessons. In a math class, a teacher provided explicit support for English Language Learners by writing an expression in words, in numbers, and also in a visual model. However, the visual representation of the expression did not clearly illustrate the concept.
- Students in several classes were annotating text to highlight the topic sentence, identify unknown vocabulary words, or to circle the conclusion. In one class, however, the teacher directed the students to annotate a text, and then proceeded to explain the annotation from the front of the room without giving students the opportunity to complete it themselves.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, integrate the instructional shifts and emphasize the development of rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

Impact

There is consistent emphasis on building college and career readiness for all students through demonstration of higher-order thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Curricula is aligned to the INPS program and reflects the mission of the school to serve English Language Learners and students who are overage and lacking credits. Tasks emphasize learning that is put into the larger context of the real world and reflect the strong personal voice of the students' experience in order to focus on the development of English language skills needed for success in adult life. One lesson plan addresses the relationship between government programs and policies and the social issues of poverty. The principal, cabinet, and coaches review and provide feedback on unit plans to ensure inclusion of higher-order questions, challenging texts, and writing that addresses a broad audience.
- Over the summer, teachers and leaders revise curricula as they identify what they want students to learn, what skills are needed, what worked in the prior year, and what did not work. One curriculum map identifies a progression of skill building from the first to the fourth year. In the first year, students are expected to be able to paraphrase an author's argument with scaffolds provided by the teacher. By the fourth year, they are expected to be able to evaluate the validity of an argument independently. A math curriculum map incorporates instructional shifts intended to bridge conceptual understanding with procedural fluency. (b)
- The principal stated that curricula should spark curiosity as well as to motivate students to persist and overcome obstacles to continuing their education. Tasks should pose a dilemma that requires research, predictions, and asserting opinions. She added, "We want them to be provocative." Higher-order and open-ended questions are included in unit and lesson plans. For example, in a lesson on writing an argumentative essay, the teacher plans to ask, "What makes this paragraph effective?"
- The school has an advisory curriculum, *GPS to College* supported by a partnership with College Access: Research and Action. This partnership includes professional development and training for staff and students. Students serve as peer leaders to help their fellow students to complete college applications.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and staff consistently communicate high expectations to the students and partner with families to help students become college and career ready.

Impact

Families understand the progress their students are making as they prepare for their future.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal determined that many adult students in this transfer high school were leaving the school after only two years. The school then started a new program to ensure students in the second semester of their second year in the JI receive additional support to encourage them to pursue and achieve the expected diploma. The school has seen an improvement in the number of students continuing on to the third year. In the 2014-2015 school year, there were 52 students in grade 11. In the current year, there are 92 students in grade 11.
- Parents have access to Jupiter Grades in order to track how well their children are progressing toward graduation and college or career. Lead teachers regularly check to ensure the teachers are keeping the records up to date so that students and parents have the most accurate information. A parent stated that teachers expect students to work hard and added, "Teachers motivate the students to do well."
- A college counselor works with all students in the SI to ensure they have support for college search and application process. Guidance counselors survey students about their interests and match them with internships with local businesses, elected officials and community-based organizations. During these internships, students put their learning into action. They use newly acquired English language skills and they develop skills to be successful in a professional workplace. Teachers, social workers and other staff supervise these weekly internships. One student related that a professional at her internship office is helping her find college programs that match her interests.
- The school has an advisory curriculum, *GPS to College* supported by a partnership with College Access: Research and Action. This partnership includes professional development and training for students to become peer leaders who help other students to complete college applications. Students prepare college application essays in their advisory classes with assistance from their English teachers.
- This school participates in the Higher Education Opportunity Program in which colleges familiar with the programs and success of students from this school reserve places for their graduates to matriculate.

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

Teachers engage in inquiry-based teams that promote the achievement of school goals including the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and facilitate the development of leadership skills.

Impact

Teacher capacity is improved and strengthened and teachers have a strong voice in decisions that improve students learning.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has four interdisciplinary teams, three in the JI and one in the SI, that include teachers along with a guidance counselor or social worker. Students are programmed for classes within each team so all team members know the students well. Teams meet weekly to discuss curriculum maps and instructional strategies, and share assessment and performance information about the students they share.
- Teams work with coaches and consultants to explore how they can improve their instruction to foster the development of skills across the curriculum. Teachers also meet in disciplinary teams in social studies, math, science, and English. They develop instructional strategies and revise rubrics to ensure they are in alignment with the Common Core and that they reflect the skills needed for success on the capstone assessments.
- The school organizes additional teams that foster the development of distributed leadership. These teams address teaching and learning, advisory and college readiness, student life, assessment coordination, and hiring of school personnel. In one team meeting, teachers discussed revising the school grading policy across both institutes to strengthen its alignment with the rubric for the capstone assessments.
- One team discussed creating a new system to track the progress students make in all content area assessments across both the JI and the SI. They determined they could utilize their existing document-sharing site so that all teachers would have access to the tool they develop. They also decided to explore the possibility of changing the school policy of putting all third year students in the SI regardless of whether they have been successful on the stepstone assessments.