Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Esperanza Preparatory Academy

Secondary School 04M372

240 East 109 Street
Manhattan
NY 10029

Principal: Luisa Morales

Dates of Review:
December 5, 2017 - December 6, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Kevin Bradley
The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the Area of Celebration to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the Area of Focus to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as Additional Finding. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School

Esperanza Preparatory Academy serves students in grade 6 through grade 12. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

### Instructional Core

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<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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</tbody>
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### School Culture

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<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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### Systems for Improvement

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<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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Area of Celebration

### Quality Indicator: 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development

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<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations as they consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students on which they are focused.

**Impact**

Promotion of the achievement of school goals through the work of teacher teams has typically resulted in improved teacher practice and student progress towards analysis and explanation of text.

**Supporting Evidence**

- An observed middle school inquiry team used the ATLAS data protocol while looking at student writing. Time was allotted for the teachers to read and write noticings. Teachers found that students’ writings included well-organized paragraphs, citing multiple pieces of evidence, transition words, and counterclaims. All teachers had an opportunity to share out and use the rubric to explain what the data suggested based on what they saw and what the rubric stated. Teachers completed the Looking at Data worksheet as they proceeded through each step of the team meeting. Next steps included that each teacher will go into an inquiry document to see what content-specific goals they can continue to push for writing across the curriculum in English Language Arts (ELA), Native Language Arts, and social studies. Teachers revise and document their ongoing process through the inquiry document regarding writing goals, implementation, and tracking student progress across content classes. Also, each teacher will develop a list of domain-specific vocabulary words for the upcoming informational writing unit; lists are to be shared and implemented in each content area to address goal of increasing the quality of writing and promote the use of vocabulary words across content classes.

- Minutes from an ELA team meeting reflect that 20 percent of the students have mastery in the writing skills that were retaught. Twelve of 60 students achieved a Level 3 and above. The remaining 60 percent of students are not yet at mastery. Teaching strategies that led to an increase in student mastery included a strong focus on annotation and paraphrasing of the text, analyzing and determining the purpose of the task, and outlining the essay at the planning page. Student misconceptions were addressed by emphasizing the components of an essay and the benefits of annotating. The protocols utilized to expand students' understanding of the concepts were the round robin and jigsaw activities. According to the results of the ANET ELA re-test, 12 out of 53 students that re-tested scored at a level 3 or higher. This yields a rate of 23 percent mastery. Forty-one of the 53 students who re-tested, or 77 percent, have not achieved mastery of the targeted skills. Misunderstandings that were evident in the re-test include utilizing relevant evidence, explaining evidence, and formulating a counterclaim with supporting evidence. Students increased their writing scores and moved up between one or two levels. Takeaways for the teacher teamwork were thorough annotation of text, question prompt, and planning writing led to increased mastery. Future instruction implications were identified as essay organization, explaining evidence, using student exemplars, and Socratic seminars.

- Teachers have strengthened their instructional capacity through team collaborations. A teacher reported, “We use the tuning protocol for lesson planning. If I have a problem, it was very specific to get feedback through that process. Then we did it separately, someone volunteered and it [the lesson plan] was distributed to everyone and through questioning, all components of the lesson were reviewed, using ATLAS. We basically analyzed the lesson with each other to give her [a teacher] constructive feedback and it prepared us for our observation, reflecting on our own lesson planning.”
**Findings**

The school’s approach to culture-building, discipline, and social-emotional support results in an environment in which that each student is known well by at least one adult.

**Impact**

While a safe environment and inclusive culture exist, student voice is not meaningfully involved in decision-making regarding school improvement efforts. Although each student is known by at least one adult and guidance supports align with student learning needs, supports do not yet have an impact on students’ academic and personal behaviors.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The school involves all stakeholders including students, parents, and staff in the development of school culture. Student voice is valued with the start of a student council. School leaders introduced a student council this school year who meet weekly together, and once a month with the principal. During the meeting with students, students spoke about how student council was new this year and they were just starting to develop a list of changes they wanted to take place in the school. However, students also spoke about a number of things in which they felt their voice was not being heard. While these practices support a safe environment and inclusive culture, meaningfully involving student voice in school improvement efforts and decision-making has not yet gained traction to effect change.

- All students reported during the student meeting that they did feel safe while at school and that the school provided an inclusive environment that welcomed all students. However, a review of the Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS) data showed reported incidents increasing in comparison to the same time period last school year.

- All students reported during the student meeting that they had at least one adult that they could go to at the school if they need support. The school has four full-time guidance counselors. One guidance counselor, assigned to the middle school, meets and conferences with students about the high school articulation process and college readiness. One guidance counselor handles the mandated counseling and supports social-emotional learning. One guidance counselor is assigned to ninth and tenth grades and another is assigned to eleventh and twelfth grades; each one meets individually with students. The school also has a partnership with Union Settlement, a community-based organization, in addition to a social worker and social worker interns from Hunter who are available after school. A designated homeroom teacher, that is, one teacher assigned to the homeroom class, also supports students. The Young Men’s Initiative, a districtwide program, launched this year focuses on ten identified students. Although the school has existing supports in place that align with student learning needs, the lack of personalizing supports for all students that impact on students’ academic and personal behaviors continues to be an area of focus for the school. There is no data yet that captures the impact of supports on effective academic and personal behaviors of students.
Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Curricula and tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

Curricula promote college and career readiness for all students. Faculty members adjust curricula using various assessment data and classroom observations so that a diversity of learners has access to tasks that are cognitively engaging.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of curricular documents reveals alignment to the Common Core and New York State (NYS) content standards where applicable, as well as integration of the instructional shifts across grades and content areas. The school uses Collections across the middle and high school for English Language Arts (ELA). In math, EngageNY is used across all grade levels. New York City Social Studies Scope and Sequence is used for social studies and the New York City Science Scope and Sequence is used for science courses.

- Curricular documents across grades and content areas evidence consistent alignment with the Common Core Learning Standards and the integration of the math instructional shifts. For example, in a sixth-grade lesson plan, students are expected to use the math vocabulary to verbally explain the steps to setting up a proportion to solve percent word problems. In an eighth-grade math lesson, students are asked to solve multi-step linear equations and analyze the process by using the math vocabulary to verbally explain their responses. Curricular documents included assignments evidencing integration of the ELA instructional shifts. For example, in a sixth-grade lesson plan, students are asked to demonstrate their understanding of tsunamis by creating a collaborative poster based on an informative text using evidence from the text to summarize their understanding. In a seventh-grade lesson plan, students are asked to cite textual evidence from *A Long Walk to Water* during literature circles.

- The lesson plan for a seventh-grade ELA lesson on literature circles focusing on citing textual evidence, includes specific differentiation for English Language Learners (ELLs) identified by name. Tiered groupings are based on assessment data, classroom observations and other data collected in class. Tier 1 students in red groupings work on translations. Tier 2 students in orange groupings work on summarizing after reading. Tier 3 students in yellow groupings have an increased number of annotations. Tier 4 students in green groupings have an increased number of annotations and text connections. Students are also paired in groups with Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) teachers. In a sixth-grade math lesson plan, the teacher will model how to use adaptations for students with disabilities and adaptations will be made for those learners needing accommodations per an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan. Any remediation needed will be aided by calculators, multiplication charts or peer tutoring. In addition, lower-level students and ELLs are being provided written and visual documents to assist comprehension of text. Also, documents are translated into Spanish and the presentation has transcription of Spanish. The paraprofessional will support assigned students in the classroom to complete class work assignments.
### Quality Indicator: 1.2 Pedagogy

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### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best by using different learning modalities based on their individual needs. Student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

### Impact

Students produce meaningful work products and take part in cognitively engaging discussions across classrooms.

### Supporting Evidence

- During a seventh-grade ELA class, literature circles with students in four groups worked on different tasks connected to their reading of *A Long Walk to Water*. Students assigned to the researchers group were looking up information on the Sudan Civil War. The summarizing and questioning group was answering questions based on two different perspectives. Students with disabilities worked with paraprofessionals as the illustrators. The connectors group was reading a text to each other and connecting it to their own lives. During a ninth-grade Algebra I class, the teacher taught the students with a dual-language focus in Spanish and English. The teacher explained functions and asked, “What function are you going to evaluate?” Students were sitting in groups working on the problems with each other. Volunteers went up to the board to solve and explain problems. During a sixth-grade math lesson on using percent proportion to solve word problems, students worked in groups using a group activity rubric. One student responded, “We used our thinking to support each other.” Another student said, “It’s easier to work out the shared ideas. I think our group did well.” The school’s belief that students learn best in cooperative groups was evident across classrooms.

- During an Advanced Placement English class, students were seated in eight groups with two, three, or four students in a group. Students worked with a partner or group to complete a jigsaw graphic organizer regarding the part of the text that they read and annotated. The teacher used Quality Teaching for English Learners (QTEL) strategies such as the base-group rotations to have students return to their base group to share out their findings on the text that they had read with their previous group and shared their learning. Students spoke of rhetorical devices, imagery, and referred back to the text for evidence. During an English 10 class, student groups looked at a Salvador Dali painting. The teacher asked, “Why do you think the author draws in this way?” Students shared out their group’s question about the painting. The teacher distributed rubric and colored markers as they transitioned to a collaborative poster activity as students began by drawing their own image that represented wisdom. QTEL strategy of each student having a different colored marker to be able to assess involvement was used. Targets instructional strategies to increase student learning, such as QTEL, were evident across classrooms.

- During an eighth-grade math class solving multi-step equations, students were sitting in pairs, working on a see-think-wonder portion of the lesson. With the use of a timer to keep pace during lesson, the teacher let students know as time counted down. The teacher referred students to question stems from previous class to develop questions and make predictions. Two minutes were used for partner talk when pairs of students shared out their solutions. During a twelfth-grade Participation in Government class, students worked in groups creating charts of political rights groups. Student groups came up to the front of the classroom to present to the whole class, displayed their poster while each member spoke during their presentation to the class. Students were able to ask follow-up questions of the group presenting, such as “What did they accomplish?” The teacher asked follow-up questions of students in relation to changes brought about due to the Chicano Movement in California. Student participation was at high levels.
## Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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### Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use and create assessments and rubrics that are aligned with the school's curricula. Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

### Impact

Teachers' use of assessments and rubrics provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement as well as make effective classroom adjustments to support all students' learning needs.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, samples of student work products showed teacher-written actionable feedback directing students to the steps they should take to strengthen their work. One example of feedback reads, “You cite evidence from the text and explain the evidence. Clearly introduce the claim in the introduction. Use multiple reasons to support your claim clearly separated in paragraphs.” Another example reads, “Evidence is cited and explained in great detail. Next time, focus on making your claim clear. Whom did he start war and slavery against?” Another example, “Your selection of varied transitions bring unity and enhance the meaning of your work. Next time, try to be insightful with the selection and explanation of your evidence.” A student reported, “This year I stepped up as a senior to actually understand the work. Since I didn’t take math last year, my math teacher conferences with me and with my teacher guiding me, she has helped me.”

- Teacher teams have used student work and data to create common rubrics and assessments and through this practice, communicate high expectations via rubrics and feedback to students. Students use rubrics and checklists as tools of self-assessment during the writing process. A student reported, “My English teacher uses the State Regents rubric; it helps us to be ready to know what will be asked of us in our work. We use it to see what we can do to improve, including organization, and evidence that we could check and revise. The rubrics help us to check on our work.” Another student stated during a sixth-grade math lesson, “We underline, circle, and do annotations. Looking at the key words in the rubric helped me and my partner remind him of the rubric and we’re on task the whole time.”

- Across classrooms, there were checks for understanding and on-the-spot adjustments such as questioning, responses, share-outs, student regroupings, and on student work products. Teachers make instructional adjustments based on the information to support all learners including student subgroups. For example, during an eighth-grade math lesson on solving multi-step equations, the teacher circulated around the room checking for understanding. Plickers were used by the teacher and students to check for understanding and gather the data with technology thus, making immediate adjustments to the lesson and groupings for what came next. During a sixth-grade math lesson, the teacher checked for understanding with groups of students who were working together and provided feedback through sticky notes that included glows and grows. During a sixth-grade ELA ICT class, as students were working in groups while creating a collaborative poster based on informative text they had previously annotated, teachers gave post-it notes with feedback to students in real time during the lesson, such as, “Where is your evidence?”
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

School leaders consistently convey high expectations to staff through ongoing feedback, a staff handbook, and professional learning aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The school provides ongoing information to families regarding student progress towards college and career readiness.

Impact

Ongoing communication and support by school leaders around classroom visits support teachers’ understanding of expectations for teaching and learning. Communication from school leaders and teachers provides opportunities for families to understand student progress towards meeting standards.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct frequent classroom observations and provide feedback utilizing the Danielson Framework for Teaching as the standard for professionalism and high-quality instruction. In the beginning of the school year, school leadership meets with each staff member, including paraprofessionals and support staff, for a one-to-one conference regarding the previous year’s data and expectations of school goals and vision, in terms of instruction. Teachers discussed the school leadership’s classroom visits, including formal observations, and explained that the feedback they received was supportive of their growth as professionals. One example of feedback reads, “I recommend allowing students to explain their thinking and how they solved the problem in their exit ticket. In addition, make students more aware of how they are going to be assessed by providing them with a group or math rubric.” One teacher reported the impact of observation feedback by explaining, “It was very clear; if I reflected, then I would see where I would fall on the Danielson [Framework for Teaching]. Proper questioning and discussion was an area I have focused on, making sure all students are engaged in instruction because of the feedback.”

- Teachers receive a staff handbook that covers a wide variety of expectations ranging from Chancellor’s Regulations, student attendance, establishing and maintaining orderly classrooms, and staff attendance. A professional development plan makes clear that school leaders support teachers in their understanding of expectations in addressing topics such as QTEL (Book – Scaffolding – The academic Success of Adolescent ELLs), ANET/Data-Driven Instruction (DDI), and Co-Teaching - Special Education/IEP Goal Setting. A teacher reported, Our Learning Partners include a triad of schools, with whom we look at our problem of practice together and determine a unified definition of rigor. The program is helping us be more accountable, as we look at data, both middle school and high school combined, linked to curriculum.”

- The school communicates with families during parent-teacher conferences, and parent outreach on Wednesdays as teachers make phone calls and communicate with parents about their child’s performance. Parents and students have access to Skedula, an online student information system. A new Esperanza Preparatory Academy website was launched in June 2017 for students, parents, and staff to have online access to the school and staff. The parent coordinator is assigned to regularly meet and communicate with parents through phone calls, robo-calls, email, online newsletters, Esperanza cafe, and one-on-one meetings. Guidance counselors are regularly meeting and communicating with parents regarding student progress. A parent reported, “I appreciate that the teacher sends home a syllabus with the requirements and breaks down the grades.” Another parent reported that the school supports her child with after-school prep classes for Regents and AP classes that help them to get into college.