Quality Review Report

2019-2020

Eximius College Preparatory Academy: A College Board School

High school 09X250
1363 Fulton Avenue
Bronx
NY 10456

Principal: Jonathan Daly

Dates of Review:
February 4, 2020 - February 5, 2020

Lead Reviewer: Jorge Estrella
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


School Quality Ratings

### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to State standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by State standards and the 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>
</tr>
<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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Quality Ratings continued

### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate schoolwide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<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>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<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 State standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator: | 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings

All teachers are engaged in inquiry-based professional collaborations on vertical and horizontal teams that promote teacher growth and the implementation of State standards. Teacher teams use the Tennis Chart protocol to systematically analyze key elements of both student and teacher work and the related student assessment data for whom they share.

Impact

The vertical and horizontal teams engaging in inquiry-based professional collaborations result in schoolwide instructional coherence, improved teacher instructional capacity, and increased mastery of goals for all learners towards increased graduation rates.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders ensure that all teachers have opportunities to engage in vertical and horizontal inquiry team collaborations built into their schedules. Meetings focus on developing and systematically defining rigorous, coherent curricula that are aligned to State standards and meet the needs of all students. Teachers meet four times a week to engage in data analysis and inquiry work using the Tennis Chart protocol. Teachers use data-driven action plans to organize and chart out the findings seen in baseline and Regents data. They then identify key grade-level needs and Standards needs. For example, benchmark assessment data shows that students across content areas are struggling with informational texts and summary-based questions. During meetings, they monitor writing skills by evaluating work samples with grade-specific rubrics and adjust their instructional strategies. Teachers reported that professional collaborations increase their instructional capacity through sharing and implementing effective teaching practices. The curricula across grades and content areas are showing instructional coherence, which promotes academic achievement for all learners. As a result of these practices, the 2019 4-year graduation rate is 80 percent, higher than the City, borough, and comparison group.

- During the observed ninth-grade inquiry team meeting, teachers prepared to look at writing pieces of 11 students using the Tennis Chart protocol to look at sub-skills. Teachers determined that students can write a claim, coherently express thoughts, and write full sentences. However, they struggled with composing complex sentences, expanding upon ideas, and refraining from using sentence fragments. Teachers agreed to modify their lessons to include sentence starters, completing varying sentence types, and for Multilingual Learners (MLLs), read aloud support. One teacher shared, “The Tennis protocol has helped us identify achievement gaps better and to take into consideration what strategies we need to modify to improve student achievement.” Students were observed using research-based writing strategies and showing mastery in using textual evidence to formulate their claims. The English department administered a mock English Language Arts (ELA) Regents exam in November 2019, and the data showed 33 percent proficiency for MLLs. The January 2020 results showed 45.4 percent proficiency. As a result, groups of students are demonstrating increased mastery in writing levels.

- Teachers consistently analyze student data to determine academic progress trends for specific groups of students. For example, on the mock Regents math examination given in November 2019, MLLs averaged a 49.8 score on the exam. The students struggled with writing an expression in standard form, translating word problems into an expression, and finding the roots of a quadratic equation. Teachers decided to incorporate more Regents types of questions into the do now and to reassess the questions in homework assignments. Teachers shared that an outcome of teacher team collaboration in analyzing student work and data is to determine targeted next instructional steps and the implementation of the strategy to enable students to master concepts, skills, and strategies that are best for their group of students. As a result of these practices, the January 2020 assessments show MLLs scored an increase of 9.5 percent.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 3.1 Goals and Action Plans | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

The instructional goals aligned with the learning needs of students and staff as apparent in the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) and other planning documents are tracked for progress and adjusted accordingly. Goals are developed with members of the School Leadership Team (SLT) and the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) and school leaders communicate with the school community regarding the school improvement plan and decision-making processes.

Impact

While school goals drive efforts to accelerate learning and social-emotional growth, there are gaps in the needs assessments and action plans to meet the needs of subgroups. The entire school community is yet to be fully involved and integral to the process of creating and tracking the short list of clear goals.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders, the ILT, and the SLT have a collaborative process that results in the development of overarching goals to support student progress and social-emotional growth that is reflected in the CEP. The planning process is conducted via ILT meetings, grade- and department-level sessions, and SLT monthly meetings. Based on data analysis, the CEP reflects three goals: to increase ELA college and career readiness amongst all students by one percent; to increase enrollment in advanced placement courses by 1.5 percent; and to increase the attendance rate by 1.5 percent. Within each of the goals, MLLs and students with disabilities have their own goals using the same metrics and measures. Although the SLT has set those goals related to improving accelerated student learning and promoting social-emotional growth amongst students, the needs assessment and action plans for each subgroup of students does not reflect what are the specific needs of those students and how the school is going to support them. As a result, the school is limiting the opportunities to make adjustments to accelerate the learning of subgroup of students.

- School leaders and teachers track the progress of the schoolwide goals via Regents assessments that are performed three times a year as well as summative and formative assessments and work products. Measures of Teacher Practice (MOTP) informed school leaders that questioning and discussion techniques are an area where the teachers need to continue working to improve their practice. Based on student results and MOTP, school leaders, in collaboration with the ILT, determined that students need to improve their writing as well as their participation in lessons and decided for accountable talk as the instructional focus for the school year. To address the social-emotional needs of students, school leaders consistently monitor the online Occurrence Reporting System data and attendance reports to track patterns of absences and disciplinary incidents in the school. This has resulted in a reduction of incidents and increased the students’ attendance rates.

- School leaders designed several mechanisms to involve and communicate with stakeholders through the SLT, parent association, teacher team meetings, and assemblies concerning school improvement plans and decision-making. There are several approaches to communicating progress on goal attainment through SLT meeting minutes, weekly messaging, professional development, and data inquiry terms. Yet, during interviews with different stakeholders, they had different understandings of goals. One parent was able to articulate the school goals but faced difficulties in explaining her involvement in the design of the goals. Other parents have different interpretations of school goals. Teachers who were members of the ILT explained in detail the goal-setting process and their involvement in the design. However, other teachers that were not part of the ILT elaborated differently and had some ideas of the school goals in mind but did not fully explain, nor elaborate on their participation during goal setting. Students faced similar challenges to articulate the school goals. Thus, the efforts to effectively communicate and involve parents, students and teachers in school improvement plans and decision-making processes are yet to be supported by all stakeholders.
Findings
School leaders and teachers ensure that all curricula are strategically aligned to the State standards. All students including MLLs and students with disabilities have access to academic tasks that are rigorous and emphasize high levels of thinking.

Impact
There is coherence of curricular planning across all grades and subject areas that promotes college and career readiness. Academic tasks are intentionally designed to use accountable talk, writing, and high-utility vocabulary to allow all students to be cognitively engaged and demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence
- School leaders and teachers develop their own curricula across grades and content areas informed by research-based practices aligned with the State standards. Instructional planning documents reflect provide models of student engagement in accountable talk and writing across all content areas across grades. Lessons are supplemented with a research-based writing strategies program, high-utility vocabulary is incorporated, and strategies for annotation and citing is evidenced across curricula so that students will formulate evidence-based arguments. As evidenced throughout instructional planning documents and in every lesson plan, teachers agreed to include the learning objective, key questions, assessments, vocabulary development, opportunities for accountable talk, pivotal questions using Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (DOK), small group discussion and independent work, use of rubrics as formative assessments as indicated. As a result of these strategic decisions, there has been an increase in Algebra I pass rate scores. Showing a 7 percent increase from 63 percent in class 2020 to 70 percent in class 2022 of the students who achieved scores that can be used to avoid remedial classes at City University of New York, thus evidenced that the school is planning a coherent curriculum that is preparing students with college and career readiness skills as they advance academically.

- Reviewed instructional planning documents revealed that curricula incorporate rigorous, open-ended performance tasks grounded in the DOK. In the Advanced Placement (AP) economics lesson plan, students work in pairs to annotate and review concepts of Nash Equilibrium and solve a model problem. Students will have an option to select a social situation where they want to find equilibrium. In a Global History unit, students will evaluate how the crusades impacted Christians, Jews, and Muslims. Students will read and annotate the book The Crusades and engage in discussions using textual evidence to support their claims. After their discussions in their small groups, students will engage as a whole class where each group will share their findings. As a result, all students will be immersed in cognitively challenging academic tasks that use different venues to promote learning and extend student thinking.

- Instructional planning documents incorporate learning strategies that engage students in tasks relevant to the real-world. Lessons are planned to provide language support, scaffolds, and use of technology to meet the needs of individual students allowing all students to achieve at higher levels. In an English lesson plan, students respond to questions such as “What defines the decade of the Roaring Twenties?” and “Why should we analyze the Roaring Twenties in-depth before reading Fitzgerald’s novel?” The teacher will assign students in stations to research different aspects of the twenties and learn various aspects of life during that time. MLLs and students with disabilities will have supports, such as high-utility vocabulary and writing resources, sentence starters, visuals, an essay template, modified text, graphic organizers, small-groups, and tablets with access to translated documents. As a result of incorporating multiple entry points and supports in lessons, all students participate in challenging tasks and are able to demonstrate their thinking.
Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies provide consistent support, including targeted small group work, technology, and student engagement, creating multiple entry points into the curricula so that all learners are challenged. Student work products and discussion reflect high levels of thinking and engagement.

Impact

All students, including MLLs and students with disabilities, are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks, discussions, and work products that reflect high levels of thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers provide multiple entry points and strategically select their small groups, placing higher achievers with those who need support, while placing MLLs in groups with students who are already bilingual. In an English class with MLLs, all students worked in small groups researching about the Roaring Twenties as a pre-reading for The Great Gatsby; each group had a theme with artifacts. Students annotated and examined articles and artifacts. MLLs were provided with translations on tablets and participated in a peer language support group. All students used graphic organizers, tablets, sentence starters, reflection sheets, and leveled articles. In group activities, students were observed justifying their reasoning and questioning the reasoning of others. In a US History class, the teacher front-loaded vocabulary, students in small groups reviewed primary documents about the Great Migration from the south, watched a video clip, and saw photographs as well as maps showing migration routes. Students with disabilities had graphic organizers, vocabulary activity sheets, and one-on-one support. These strategies equipped all students to engage in discussions with their peers identifying facts of the Great Migration from the south. As a result of access to scaffolds, students participated in challenging activities that engage them in higher-order thinking across classrooms.

- In an Algebra class, students added and subtracted polynomial expressions, working in groups using the keywords, information, and memory clue (KIM) strategy. Students used discussion prompts, rubrics, and questions such as “What are like terms?” During their interactions, students showed high levels of thinking by establishing different approaches to solving their problems. In a World History class on industrialization, teachers promoted student interaction by posing challenging questions such as “How revolutionary was the Industrial Revolution?” Students worked in small groups, using accountable talk stems and rubrics to monitor their learning process. Students then developed an argument based on evidence and justified their thinking by going back to the text. As a result of collaborative practices and cognitive supports, lessons reflect high levels of student participation, self-reflection, critical thinking, and participation.

- Teaching strategies to engage students in high levels of collaboration and discussion to produce cognitive engagement were observed. In an earth science class, students worked in groups using assistive technology, video clips and pictures, and manipulatives to understand various types of weathering. Students worked in groups, rotating into eight different stations analyzing different weathering events. In each station, students recorded information based on their observations and used the findings to engage in conversations. For example, students were comparing the difference between chemical weathering and ice weathering. In a living environment Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class on the excretory system, students were working in groups using visuals, videos, graphic organizers, and rubrics. Students with disabilities received one-on-one support from teachers as well as peer support. One teacher was observed reading aloud to a small group. Also, MLLs were provided with translated text. Students discussed how the body eliminates liquids and in which type of weather the body eliminates more fluids. During these interactions, all students observed were engaged in meaningful discussions supporting an increased level of mastery and understanding; the students then participated in whole-class discussions.
Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies 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

Most students and teachers receive actionable feedback, based on rubric criteria, that informs next steps regarding student achievement. The use of the red, yellow, green rubric (RYG) used by teachers to implement ongoing checks for understanding results in effective on-the-spot instructional adjustments.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers shared that they design rubrics that are aligned to State standards and Regents exams. Also, teachers use task-specific rubrics to assess student’s proficiency and content knowledge related to specific performance tasks, providing feedback to students regarding what they do well and what needs improvement. A rubric for argument writing allowed teachers and students to assess work based on ideas, content and analysis, command of evidence, coherence, organization and style, and control of conventions. Teachers created a RYG rubric for students to use during instruction, for self-assessment, and for certain assignments. Interviewed students shared that using rubrics helped them have a better understanding of their achievement and helped them meet the requirements for graduation. Teachers use a schoolwide grading policy, aligned to curricula, to assess student progress, provide feedback to students and their families, and to monitor student performance across content areas.

- A review of student work products revealed that several teachers use glows and grows as well as next steps to provide actionable feedback to students. For a Living Environment assignment, the glow was, “Excellent job making connections between organelles and the supermarket” and the grow was “Please double check the rubric and the description so you don’t miss organelles.” In an Algebra assignment, the teacher’s feedback states, “You did good by solving those problems. Next, you must explain your work.” Students shared that teachers are available during class, lunch time, or afterschool to help them understand how to accomplish their assignments, and that in those cases teachers use different approaches to explain the assignment.

- Across classrooms, most teachers were observed conferring with students to ensure that they were on task to clarify specific concepts, skills, or processes to help them accomplish their tasks. While teachers conferred with students, they pushed students’ thinking as evidenced in students’ participation and work products. Most teachers use conference notes, RYG rubrics, exit slips, and questioning as part of checks for understanding to make on-the-spot adjustments to lessons. In Algebra class, while students were working on their do now problem, the teacher circulated around the room noting students’ responses and marking their working sheets with red, yellow and green markers. The teacher then asked students to stop and regrouped them in three groups by color code. Each group received a differentiated task assignment. This effective approach of implementing checks for understanding through conferring is capturing students’ progress and is consistently reflected across classrooms.

- During classroom visits, students were observed monitoring their own work using several approaches such as checklists, RYG rubrics, and peer assessments, which equip students to assess their own understanding and identify the areas in which they are doing well and those they need to improve. This was evidenced in classrooms visited, bulletin boards, and during interviews with students where several reported that engaging in self-assessment activities allows them to identify the areas they need to improve to have better grades. As a result of self-assessment practices, students are aware of their learning needs, and what they need to do to meet their learning targets.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: Well Developed |

Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching to the entire staff through professional development (PD), professional learning cycles (PLCs) and intervisitations. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates high expectations for all students.

Impact
Ongoing communication to staff and targeted support to teachers is centered on high expectations resulting in a culture of mutual accountability. All students, including high need sub-groups, own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders have established consistent means of communicating high expectations to staff, including the identification of model teachers who exhibit exemplary practices aligned with the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teachers shared that through team discussions at teacher teams, one-to-one sessions, emails, intervisitations, and a school handbook, school leaders ensure that all staff members are well informed about expectations related to instruction, PD, teacher team protocols, classroom environment, and several other areas of day-to-day school operations. School leaders use the Danielson Framework for Teaching to reinforce those expectations, to provide feedback on lessons and engage them in reviews of student portfolios, class data, and their own written self-assessment, so that all teachers are aware of the high expectations for teaching and learning. Through these means administrators provide targeted and individualized support for all staff, resulting in shared accountability around student learning.

- School leaders use a data-driven approach when planning for PD by looking at student and teacher data and identifying the biggest areas of need. School leaders look at Advance ratings from the previous year and build the PD plan to address those needs. One approach used for PD is PLCs, which are driven by teacher needs and observation data. All teachers are given a choice in the cycles, and some are also pointed to cycles that are best suited for them based on observation data. Teachers shared that school leaders support their development through frequent professional learning focused on high expectations for all students through teacher teams, PD, intervisitations, mentoring, focused walkthroughs, and ongoing feedback, equipping them to meet the school's high expectations for teaching and learning. Thus, collaborative activities such as these, lead to a shared focus of high expectations and mutual practices that promote a collective investment in achieving goals.

- Teachers consistently communicate high expectations for all students. Students receive mentoring, youth development, and college and career exploration through a partnership with a community-based organization. Students shared that they engage in college work by doing research, using accountable talk stems, writing essays, participate in oral presentations, and use technology to prepare their work. Incoming freshmen are enrolled in the Hayden summer bridge program, where they engage in literacy-based and hands-on math activities while learning the school’s expectations and core values. All interviewed students, including MLLs and students with disabilities, shared that the school provided them with all the necessary support and advice for applying to college. During the meeting with students one MLL shared that the school offers them supports to meet graduation requirements. For example, he attends a Saturday program where he receives classes from an ENL teacher. The student disclosed those classes helped him improve his English skills and he said, “Now I am on track for graduation.” In addition, students are showing progress in Advance Placement (AP) classes. In AP Spanish, results show a mean score of 4.06 outperforming New York at 3.75 and global at 3.72, and 2019, MLLs 4-year graduation rate is 82 percent which is higher than the City and borough.