

Quality Review Report

2019-2020

West Prep Academy

Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 03M421

**150 West 105 Street
Manhattan
NY 10025**

Principal: Carland Washington

**Dates of Review:
February 13, 2020 - February 14, 2020**

Lead Reviewer: Edward Hazen

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

West Prep Academy serves students in grade 6 through grade 8. 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		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area	Rating
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	Additional Finding	Well Developed
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	Area of 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	Area of Celebration	Well Developed

School Quality Ratings continued

School Culture

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area	Rating
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults	Additional Finding	Well Developed
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Additional Finding	Well Developed

Systems for Improvement

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area	Rating
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	Additional Finding	Well Developed
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	Additional Finding	Proficient
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	Additional Finding	Well Developed
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Additional Finding	Well Developed
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	Additional Finding	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

The vast majority of teachers use assessments and rubrics that align to the curricula to monitor student progress toward achievement of school-identified grade level benchmarks. Teachers use analyses of assessment data to monitor student progress, make instructional decisions, and adjust or refine curricula and academic tasks.

Impact

Teachers' use of common rubrics and assessments provides actionable and meaningful feedback to students and teachers. Teachers make informed adjustments to curriculum and instruction, resulting in all students demonstrating increased progress toward mastery of the State standards.

Supporting Evidence

- The vast majority of teachers use rubrics, checklists, and assessments that align to the schoolwide curricula. Teacher teams consistently provide timely and accurate data on student progress that teachers use to make instructional decisions. Teachers disaggregate data by ability range and assign students to instructional groups in the classroom or schedule additional targeted intensive interventions and supports by intervention staff. In this way, teams provide actionable and meaningful feedback to teachers regarding student progress toward mastery, including identifying skills that require improvement. Likewise, a review of student work and teacher conference notes indicates that all teachers provide students with verbal and written feedback, with clear next steps for improvement. Students reported that because of peer-to-peer feedback, self-reflection activities, and teachers' recommendations, their writing has improved across content areas. For example, as a result of teachers' feedback to go deeper with their analysis, interpretation, or explanations, students note that they now elaborate more in their informational, persuasive, and narrative writing by including quality evidence to support their arguments or more descriptive details in their creative writing.
- School leaders and teachers use multiple assessment measures to monitor student progress toward mastery of the State standards. They also use these to identify which students may require additional academic support or targeted intensive intervention as part of the schoolwide Response to Intervention (RtI) protocol. The school leaders, math coach, teachers, and support staff monitor student data and work products weekly in grade level teams to identify students who are performing at, below, and above benchmark. Analysis of data and student work informs teachers' decisions to develop tiered interventions that accelerate learning for all students and leads to revisions to curricula, including daily lesson plans and student groupings, such as leveled cooperative learning groups, to meet the needs of all learners.
- Grade level teams analyze State English Language Arts (ELA) and math tests, benchmark assessments, exit tickets, and common curriculum-based assessments to determine instructional groupings in the classroom and identify students that require additional Tier I support in the classroom, such as small group instruction. Likewise, teachers and support staff use data to determine which students need more intensive Tier II instruction or Tier III support using specialized programs to target literacy or math deficits. Additionally, data is used to determine scheduling for the daily, dedicated strategic reading period. Teams use data to plan specialized individualized strategies for struggling students and enrichment activities for students who are at or above benchmark. These include ability-based student groups, explicit small group instruction, and the provision of leveled texts. As a result, the percentage of Multi-Lingual Learners (MLLs) meeting proficiency on the State math exam improved from 0 percent in 2018 to 13 percent in 2019.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	---------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

Teachers engage students in authentic, meaningful academic tasks and discussions that are differentiated to provide multiple entry points for all learners. Teachers utilize strategies such as the small group instruction and discussions to promote high levels of thinking and to engage a diversity of learners.

Impact

While teaching strategies reflect school-identified best practices and provide students with challenging learning tasks that require critical thinking, high-quality extensions were not observed across the vast majority of classes visited. Although academic tasks encourage inquiry and collaboration, only some students showed ownership of their work.

Supporting Evidence

- In most classes, students were provided with scaffolds and supports, such as prompts, manipulatives, checklists, and graphic organizers, to allow for multiple entry points into the lesson. In some classes visited, small-group instruction and differentiated problem sets engaged students, including students with disabilities, in challenging academic tasks. In an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) ELA class, the teachers modeled how to make inferences from images prior to having students work in ability-based collaborative groups to make their own interpretations. Students were provided with note catchers and sentence starters while teachers offered individual support to groups that needed further assistance. Teachers took note of these students to plan further supports and scaffolding for subsequent lessons. Similarly, in a social studies ICT class, students were placed in pre-determined partnerships with leveled articles and accountable talk stems to allow all students to participate in a fishbowl discussion on slavery and abolitionists. Since the teacher had provided multiple entry points for students, there were high levels of student engagement in the discussion.
- While across classrooms teachers provided differentiated instruction, structured supports, and extension activities for students, these practices were not observed in all classes visited. In a science lesson, students engaged in experimental activities to determine how the human body regulates its temperature. Expected learning outcomes were identical for all students, and all students were given the same materials for the task. Thus, there were no multiple entry points into the lesson or scaffolds to support varied learning abilities. Absent these, some students struggled to make connections between specific elements of the lesson, preventing all students from meeting the lesson target. Likewise, in a math class, students who finished early did not have an extension activity. Consequently, they waited for further direction from the teacher rather than participating in an extended learning task which could have promoted deeper understanding of the concept.
- The level of structured group work that holds students individually accountable for contributing to the work of cooperative learning groups varied across classrooms. In an ELA class, students working in groups were provided with questions to answer to engage them in a carousel discussion to demonstrate their understanding of the themes in the book they were reading. Most students had collegial conversations and were able to make accurate claims, with some students making a connection between the character and themselves. However, not all students participated equally, and some students were observed not actively listening to the group discussion, resulting in their not taking ownership of their work. This is consistent with reports from interviews with students, with some stating that the level of equal participation in group discussions and of students taking responsibility for their tasks varied across classes. Thus, student ownership was not present in the vast majority of classrooms.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

Curricula and academic tasks are strategically aligned to the schoolwide instructional focus of using academic language and discussion to integrate the State standards. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

There is curricular alignment and coherence across grades and disciplines that promote rigor and college and career readiness. Teachers plan lessons and tasks to ensure that all students, including MLLs and students with disabilities, have access to learning and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers ensure that curricula align to State Standards by planning multiple opportunities for students to engage in literacy-based skills. Tasks are planned that stress meaningful higher order text-based discussions, with ample writing across the curricula. Teachers strategically integrate cognitively challenging questions, discussion starters, and problem-solving tasks into units of study and lesson plans. Across grades and disciplines, lesson plans and curricula contain common practices that teachers utilize to foster high levels of student engagement and discourse, requiring students to make connections across texts, to themselves, and to relevant current events, such as the primary presidential debates. The school leaders and teacher teams evaluate the level of rigor present in the units of study and the depth of the alignment to the State standards during weekly common planning time. Curricula documents and supplemental resources are organized in digital folders using the school's online-shared drive. Teachers reported that the shared folders are effective and give them instant access to curricula. Additionally, this allows for efficacy when co-teachers are planning parallel lessons, specialized instruction, or interventions.
- To build coherence across content areas, school leaders and teachers have adopted a program that requires students to use the same academic vocabulary and language across disciplines. This occurs while developing arguments to debate a relevant social issue, such as legislating medical marijuana. Each week, teachers reinforce use of the pre-identified, high-leverage key terms by embedding them into lesson plans. Additionally, teachers use common strategies and protocols in their units and lesson plans to encourage high level discussions, such as turn and talk, think-pair-share, and Socratic seminars. Similarly, a review of lesson plans indicates that teachers typically begin a lesson by modeling a skill or concept, followed by independent or collaborative practice in a small group setting. Opportunities for students to process the information and reflect on their learning are evidenced by the vast majority of lesson plans in which teachers require students to self- or peer-evaluate their work with a rubric prior to the teachers' assessment of their work. This practice fosters student reflection, builds instructional coherence, and facilitates college and career readiness.
- Lessons are planned and revised using analysis of student work and assessment data so that individual and groups of students, including students with disabilities, have access to the curricula. Grade level teachers meet weekly to use their review of student work to plan instructional groups for students, to design lessons, and to identify scaffolds and interventions to address skill deficits. For example, a daily, dedicated strategic reading period for learners allows teachers to plan additional specialized instruction for students with disabilities and MLLs, as well as interventions to target identified skill deficits for students performing below grade level in reading or writing. To address all learners, student book clubs serve as enrichment opportunities for higher performing students, with students leading their own learning by facilitating group book discussions. This activity, and those described above, foster student cognitive engagement.

Additional Finding

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

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff through access to best practices on a shared drive and ongoing professional development (PD). High expectations for students are effectively communicated to families through workshops, learning sessions, and other family engagement events while a culture for learning is established that reinforces those expectations to students.

Impact

A culture of mutual accountability for high expectations exists between leaders and staff. Systems of accountability for students and strong parent participation in the learning of their children ensure that all students are aware of their progress toward college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders expressed a belief in reciprocal accountability with staff and the need to provide structures and supports for teachers to meet high expectations for teaching and learning. The principal consistently communicates expectations to the staff to highlight initiatives, instructional foci, and next steps for continuous improvement. The school leaders promote the sharing of best practices and resources using the school's shared drive. Teachers and teacher teams post inquiry team meeting information, curriculum maps and unit plans with adjustments noted, lesson plans, and student material, which results in transparency and mutual accountability. Thus, online access to the shared resources is available for all staff from anywhere. A collaborative Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) adapts and revises PD opportunities in response to observations, learning walks, and student data. The team also identifies key staff members to lead PD sessions to support teachers in meeting the schoolwide expectations, further resulting in mutual accountability for the implementation of instructional foci.
- The school leaders and staff implement effective strategies for communicating high expectations about college and career readiness with families to ensure that all students are challenged to meet or exceed those expectations. The faculty and administration host workshops to engage parents in discussions about curricula, pedagogy, and preparation for the next level, with an emphasis on linking the rigor of the curricula and schoolwide expectations to college and career readiness. Teachers provide sessions on learning strategies that parents can use at home to involve them in the learning of their children. Moreover, staff ensure that families are aware of the expected outcomes for each grade level, including a portfolio maintained and updated annually by students that can be used in the high school admissions process. In addition, schoolwide expectations for students to achieve at or above proficiency on benchmark tests, such as State math and ELA assessments and the Living Environment Regents for eighth graders, are effectively communicated to all stakeholders via multiple platforms, including the school website and the online grading system.
- Parents report that communication to families is very clear and expectations for each grade level are clearly articulated to students and parents. Both groups reported that there are effective systems to monitor academic progress, and students and families receive timely feedback on how they are progressing toward meeting grade level expectations via the school's online reporting system. The school leaders and teachers partner with families by having students lead parent teacher conferences, during which students must demonstrate their learning while their parents actively listen and ask clarifying questions, thus giving them ownership of their own educational experiences. As a result, both students and their parents are aware of their progress towards meeting high expectations and college and career readiness.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	--	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

School leaders support the professional growth of teachers using a strategic cycle of observation that provides actionable feedback to teachers, including next steps for improvement, using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*.

Impact

School leaders have an effective system to observe teachers and support their practice through follow-up professional learning opportunities that align with teachers' professional goals and promote the adoption of common instructional practices schoolwide.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders support teachers during the observation process by providing timely, targeted, and meaningful feedback with next steps for improvement. Feedback to teachers includes both that recorded on formal evaluation forms as well as non-evaluative feedback from the ILT's instructional rounds. Additionally, teachers support each other's professional growth via collegial feedback from peer to peer intervisitation. Teachers report that this cycle results in improvements in instruction. A review of Advance reports indicates that school leaders rate selected components of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* based upon observed level of effectiveness, using specific low inference evidence collected during the classroom visits. Formal observations, along with additional evaluator's notes, are then shared with teachers during post-observation meetings. School leaders provide teachers with the rationale for the level of the rating, along with actionable feedback that includes identified strengths and recommendations for improvement.
- Teachers report that leaders have high expectations about improving their pedagogical practices, which include rigorous instruction and high levels of student engagement. Observations focus on the school's prioritized goals, such as promoting literacy across content areas and fostering high levels of student discourse using Tier II and III vocabulary words. Teachers stated that the feedback and next steps, such as observing a colleague, have been effective in improving their practice. They expressed an appreciation for the support system that has been implemented schoolwide, such as the mentoring program and ongoing PD opportunities. A teacher new to the profession stated that she was grateful to be participating in the mentoring program, because it has been helping her improve her practice. Teachers report that they routinely observe one another's' practice when implementing new instructional strategies or often ask peers to observe their classes to garner targeted feedback.
- School leaders provide feedback to teachers from observations and from reviews of teacher team minutes and curriculum documents. This feedback is shared at individual meetings between teachers and school leaders to identify next steps for individualized improvement as well as during departmental and grade team meetings. This process ensures pedagogical expectations are clearly articulated to all and remain aligned to the agreed-upon instructional priorities of the school, such as embedding literacy into the curricula and using questioning techniques to increase student discourse. Moreover, school leaders can capture strengths and recommend next steps for both individual teachers and their respective departments. As a result, leaders analyze the information garnered for patterns and trends to inform PD planning for teachers. For example, a review of trends in observation data from across grades and subjects resulted in the addition of PD sessions for teachers in areas such as the effective use of higher-order questioning techniques. This process also resulted in the addition of a math coach. Similarly, teachers are encouraged to engage in intervisitation with colleagues identified as being pedagogically strong in areas in which the teachers should improve their practice.

Additional Finding

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

Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based teamwork to embed rigorous habits into lesson plans and units of study. Teacher teams analyze student data to identify instructional practices that will close gaps in student achievement.

Impact

All teachers participate in departmental teacher teams to analyze data and student work products, resulting in schoolwide instructional coherence. The work of teacher teams has strengthened teachers' professional practice and improved student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams use a structured protocol to make collaborative curricular and lesson plan improvements. These are aligned to the schoolwide goal of creating student-centered lessons that facilitate high levels of student discourse and collaboration while focusing on student use of academic vocabulary across disciplines. Teachers collaborate to analyze student work to focus on skill deficits and design rigorous lessons emphasizing high levels of thinking and use of Tier III language in all classes, promoting college and career readiness. Likewise, departmental and ICT teams engage in inquiry work to examine the impact of specific instructional strategies on student achievement, with an emphasis on creating coherence and embedding student ownership by promoting student reflection on their learning. After revising lessons and implementing them in the classroom, the teams reconvene to assess which strategies had an impact on student learning, resulting in increased instructional coherence. For example, to increase students' use of Tier I and II vocabulary, teachers planned interdisciplinary lessons that focused on a set of key terms across content areas. Teachers assessed students' ability to use the terms in context. Following this, teams reconvened to determine the next instructional steps to take to increase student achievement in literacy and foster student ownership of their writing and speaking progress.
- Teachers meet in grade-level and department teams to analyze assessment data from common formative assessments, such as writing prompts and exit tickets, and formal summative assessments, such as end-of-unit tests. These assessments provide teacher teams with baseline data to inform changes to curricula and instruction, including identifying instructional practices to address specific needs of groups of students, such as students with disabilities and MLLs. Data are used to create instructional groups, inform the daily strategic reading period and enrichment academies, and provide targeted interventions for the lowest performing students. These practices have resulted in a 20 percent increase in the percentage of students meeting Next-Level Readiness, as determined by the NYC Department of Education's Next-Level Readiness Index, from 33 percent in 2018 to 53 percent in 2019. This metric measures the percentage of eighth grade students who take and pass high school level courses and corresponding Regents exams.
- Teacher teams meet weekly to analyze assessment data from a variety of sources, including end-of-unit assessments, online benchmark progress monitoring tests, and formal State exams. School leadership requires teachers to administer common assessments to students in all disciplines to provide teacher teams with timely data to inform additional supports for students, including the RtI process and the strategic reading intervention and enrichment periods. The data are used to create instructional groups and provide targeted interventions for struggling students to address specific, individualized skill deficits. These practices have resulted in overall increase of students meeting proficiency on the State math exam, from 11 percent in 2018 to 25 percent in 2019. This, the work of teacher teams has improved student achievement.