

Promising Practices Series: College Preparation

Center for School Success



Center for School Success Promising Practices Series

College Preparation

Curriculum Integration

Dual Language

Professional Development

Special Education Inclusion

Other Resources in the Promising Practices Series

Block Scheduling

Guide to School Visits

Student Advisories

Each publication in this series includes a brief overview of research relating to the practice featured, descriptions of one or more schools using the practice, and resources for finding more information. For access to a library of materials that schools have created in relation to the practices, visit our Center for School Success website at www.newvisions.org/schoolsuccess.

To get the most information about these practices, we encourage you to visit the schools. You will find school contact information listed within each publication. We have also developed a Guide to School Visits (see Appendix) to assist you in arranging and planning a school visit.

For more information about New Visions for Public Schools and our programs, please visit our main Web site at www.newvisions.org.

COLLEGE PREPARATION

Center for School Success Promising Practices Series

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Center for School Success Promising Practices Series: College Preparation
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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Promising Practices Series! This series will introduce you to some innovative New York City public schools and the instructional practices they use to help students learn and achieve. The series is intended for anyone who is or wants to be involved in improving schools, from administrators and teachers to parents and community partners. Our goal is to support people doing the challenging work of school development, and our message to you is: “You are not alone!”

There are many New York City public school teachers and administrators who have worked hard to develop instructional practices that help their students succeed. We want to provide opportunities for you to learn from them. Our goal is not to offer “models” to replicate. Rather, we want to provide information on the experiences of a wide range of schools in order to stimulate thinking and innovation. Some of the schools featured in this series have existed for less than five years, while others first opened more than 15 years ago. Regardless of their age, they are all works-in-progress, a distinguishing characteristic of effective learning communities. They have all had to face the many demands of an urban educational system -- from changes in policy and funding to staff shortages -- and these are reflected in the how they have modified their practices throughout the years.

This publication focuses on college preparation. In the 21st century, a high school diploma is no longer a good indicator of success. Therefore, American high schools must give students the knowledge and skills they need to go on to college and prosper in a constantly advancing world. Rigorous standards, a core academic curriculum and invested college counselors are the centerpieces of a college bound culture. The two schools featured in this publication demonstrate ways to develop a program that promotes college access for all students.

New Visions for Public Schools is the largest education reform organization dedicated to improving the quality of education children receive in New York City’s public schools. Working with the public and private sectors, New Visions develops programs and policies to energize teaching and learning and raise the level of student achievement. New Visions started the Center for School Success (CSS) in 1999 to document and disseminate innovative educational practices demonstrated by New Visions’ schools that hold promise for increasing student achievement throughout New York City. The success of these schools should serve as examples that New York City public schools, serving the full range of students in New York City, can work.

CRITERIA FOR PROMISING PRACTICE

A school's instructional model should aspire to meet the following criteria in order to be considered a "Promising Practice."

1. College preparation is a central part of the school's mission. The school's programmatic focus, curricular offerings, student recruitment, staff hiring and budget process are consistent with this mission and are supported by the school's administration, staff, and parents.
2. College advisors are integral members of the school's education team. Advisors are knowledgeable about schools and schooling, actively work to remove barriers to college, work closely and collaboratively with all educators in the school building, and are supported by the school administration. Ongoing professional development is provided to help college advisors develop and improve their skills.
3. The school offers students a rigorous academic curriculum. College completion is closely related to high school curriculum quality, particularly for African-American and Latino students. As the College Board recommends, high school students should complete the following coursework:
 - four years in English language arts;
 - three years of a lab science (i.e., biology, chemistry, physics or earth/space science);
 - at least three years of mathematics (i.e., algebra, geometry, advanced algebra, trigonometry, calculus); and
 - at least three years of social studies (i.e., U.S. history, U.S. government, economics, world history or geography).
4. The school expects that all of its students will be able to apply to and be accepted into a college by senior year. Schools with college bound cultures develop pathways for all students to achieve college admission and success. For example, high-performing students are provided with opportunities to take college-level work early and students who are struggling academically receive extra instructional time and support.
5. The school holds itself accountable for student success by using data to track the progress of every student through each grade and upon entering college. This student data is used to plan and modify the program.
6. The college program provides or brokers a range of up-to-date resources and services for students and parents to facilitate college preparation. The college office maintains student records, a system to track student applications, college materials, financial aid information, testing information, and contacts with college admission offices. Also, the college program secures additional resources through other agencies and institutions that offer college access support.
7. The school's college program encourages parent involvement. The program informs parents about the importance of college and the courses students must complete to successfully apply to college, and guides parents through the entire college application process, including how to choose, apply to, and obtain funding for a college education. The school introduces parents to this information when their children enter the school and no later than the end of the sophomore year.
8. The college program encourages students to enroll in college directly after high school graduation. Ensuring college enrollment directly following high school graduation is a better indicator of a successful college bound culture than high school program completion within four years. Students who graduate "late" but enroll directly into college after receiving their diploma, and, at some point, attend a four-year college, tend to successfully complete their bachelor degrees.

EXEMPLARY COLLEGE PREPARATION AT . . .

Brooklyn College Academy

Juliana Rogers, Principal
2900 Bedford Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11210
718.951.5941

Year Started: 1986
Enrollment: 490 students
(79 Middle School and 411 High School)
Grades: 7th-12th

OVERVIEW

Brooklyn College Academy was established by the NYC Department of Education in collaboration with the City University of New York. The school has two sites. Grades eleven and twelve are located in a building on the Brooklyn College campus and grades seven through ten are at an off-campus annex site, called the Brooklyn College Academy at Bridges. The Academy admits students who have not succeeded in other schools, or do not desire a traditional school program. As a transfer school, students are admitted to the Academy from neighborhoods throughout Brooklyn based on guidance counselor recommendations at various stages of their high school experience. The school's curriculum focuses on college preparation through standards-based courses, an articulated seven through twelve curriculum, collaborative learning, Regents and performance-based assessments, heterogeneous groupings, smaller class sizes, tutorials, independent study, and a strong guidance support system.

DESIGN OF THE COLLEGE PROGRAM

The entire school, grades seven through twelve, is focused on college preparation, and every senior is expected to be accepted into a college. All courses are standards-based and geared towards preparing students for college. Teachers focus on helping students develop the skills necessary to succeed in college. In this way, students are surrounded by support for the college program. Students are encouraged to take college preparatory courses, such as pre-calculus, chemistry, as well as courses at Kingsborough and Brooklyn Colleges.

Every senior at the school must pass the year-long College Prep course. The course was developed by the teaching staff in reaction to the problems that their students were encountering with SATs, college applications, financial aid, and scholarships. The English teachers had been providing some preparation for students, and were helping with essay writing, but only on an ad hoc basis. Many of the parents were unable to provide or sustain support for college preparation. Therefore, teachers decided that students needed a dedicated, small-sized English class that focused on SAT review, writing college essays, and filing college and scholarship applications.

Through the College Prep course, teachers and the college advisor work one-on-one with students to guide them through the college admissions, financial aid, and scholarship processes. In this way, all students are given the supports that they need to think about college as a viable option for their future.

The program is staffed by several teachers on a part-time basis. One teacher serves as the Scholarship Advisor, teaches the College Prep course, and one additional course. As the Scholarship Advisor, her role is to track all college scholarships that come to the school and match them directly with individual students who best qualify for the scholarships. She maintains constant contact with the students to ensure that they complete their applications, makes photocopies of all necessary papers, contacts parents regarding any necessary information, and mails all scholarship applications. She regularly contacts students and parents at school, work, and at home throughout the college application process. The Advisor has established a very successful scholarship program, with several Brooklyn College Academy students winning prestigious grants in large competitions.

At least one additional teacher teaches the College Prep course; the number of teachers needed for the course depends on senior class enrollment. Teaching College Prep also means that the teacher serves as a Senior Advisor to the students. The College Prep course counts as part of the teachers' regular contractual course load.

COLLEGE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

College advisement activities at Brooklyn College Academy are offered over two years, beginning in the Junior year. Juniors begin their official college preparation after the January English Regents exam. Those students who pass the Regents are enrolled in TestU, a computer-based SAT preparation course. It is given as part of the English curriculum and is aligned with the English language arts standards. In addition, all juniors attend an annual luncheon, which serves as an opportunity to prepare them for twelfth grade and the required College Prep course.

The College Prep course is the major program activity. All seniors must take the College Prep course to graduate. It is a full-year English class which meets six periods a week. Within the course, students hone their reading and writing skills while preparing for SATs, writing college essays, completing and filing college and scholarship applications, and applying for financial aid. As requirements for passing the course, all students must:

- take the SATs;
- submit a CUNY application (and they are strongly encouraged to submit a SUNY application);
- complete required coursework, including a minimum of two college essays; and
- apply for college scholarships.

At the beginning of the year, students receive a course outline and a list of course requirements. Students must fulfill all course requirements in order to pass the course. They must write a minimum of one college essay per semester. Essays are rewritten until they meet the stated standards; the English Regents' standards are currently being utilized. Students must bring in their completed SAT application, envelope, and stamp—and they must take the SAT. They must submit a CUNY application before the end of the first semester. They must bring in their scholarship essay, an envelope, and a stamp.

As part of the college preparation program students attend college fairs, and representatives from colleges such as Wesleyan and Swarthmore visit the school to speak with students. College fairs and presentations by college speakers are held during the regular school day, after school, and on weekends. Seniors also have an annual brunch,

which serves as a college fair and a workshop for college preparation. In addition, through the school's partnership with Brooklyn College, students are able to go on college trips for free or a nominal fee as part of the Talent Search program.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRAM PLANNING

The Scholarship Advisor is the guiding force behind the program. She mentors the other College Prep teacher(s) and turnkeys the information and strategies that she uses for the staff. The teachers who work in the program try to get together for planning and preparation whenever possible, but scheduling issues prevent them from having a set meeting time every week.

The school's College Prep course is constantly being revisited. It was originally developed in September 1998 by the current college advisor and the principal as a course for those students whose schedules permitted it, for four periods a week. In September 1999, staff recognized that more time was needed for essay writing and SAT preparation, so it was extended to six periods a week and was mandated for all seniors. This is where the course currently stands. The introduction of the TestU course in January 2001 also represents a change that has occurred over time to address teacher-identified student needs.

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

All students at Brooklyn College Academy are prepared to take all required Regents exams for graduation, as mandated by the New York State Board of Regents. Students are also assessed on class-based student portfolios and hands-on performance tasks. As stated above, students must also pass the College Prep course to graduate.

The Academy's college acceptance rate is 100 percent. Each year, more students are receiving significant scholarships. For the 2000-2001 school year, the senior class had 70 students who, collectively, won many scholarships, including: POSSE (full scholarship), Chase Smart (paid internship, full scholarship, plus a laptop), Hispanic Heritage award (\$2,000, a laptop, and \$1,000 to the charity of the student's choice), Albert Shanker (\$5,000), father's union scholarship (\$4,000 per year for four years), Coca-Cola (\$2,000), NYS Lottery (\$4,000), CUNY Honors, two New York Times semifinalists (7,000 applications, 120 semifinalists, 20 awards), and many more.

Informal assessments are also conducted. Teachers say that students have become more college-minded and thoughtful: students take more college bound courses and talk more "college talk." This seems to "filter down" to juniors and starts the next class with the right mind set for the college application process.

The school tries to track its graduating students to the greatest extent possible, though administrators would like to develop a better process for tracking. While all students are accepted into a college, not all attend. The small number who do not attend college have instead chosen to get jobs, join the armed services, or care for family members at home. Many former students come back to visit the school and staff to express their appreciation for the encouragement and support they received from staff at the Academy.

ADAPTING THE PROGRAM TO FIT INDIVIDUAL STUDENT NEEDS

The Academy students represent all levels of educational achievement. The college program is highly individualized, particularly in the individual attention that is given to each student in the College Prep course. The teachers meet with students and give them extra support before, during, and after school. The Scholarship Advisor matches each scholarship to individual students based on their needs, skills, characteristics, and abilities.

When a College Prep teacher sees that a student is having difficulties, the teacher and student meet to discuss the issues. Teachers will sit with students during lunch and/or after school until work is completed and/or meets the standards. Some teachers give additional special projects to students with difficulties so that they can pass the course. Teachers will call parents at home and at work to discuss the issues and/or to track down necessary documentation (i.e. tax forms for financial aid forms).

There are very few English Language Learners (ELLs) or special education students in the school, and they are mainstreamed to the greatest extent possible. Mainstreamed students are included in the college preparatory program, including the College Prep course, and must meet all of its requirements.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parents are involved in the school through the School Leadership Team and PTA. With regard to the College Program, parents are kept informed throughout the process. The school regularly sends parents announcements and information about the College Program, including information about the PSATs and SATs, college materials, ninth grade orientation (which has a focus on college) and other issues. Parents are also sent the grading policy for the College Prep course. In addition, parents receive other documents that have to be signed, such as college applications, scholarship applications, and financial aid forms. Teachers call parents at home to follow-up about these documents. Parents are free to call teachers and the Scholarship Advisor if they have any questions.

In the junior year, there is a big push to think ahead to college. There is a luncheon for parents of juniors to inform them of the College Prep program. The parents are also introduced to EXSPAN, a computer program that is used to look at colleges and scholarships.

The school would like to start the year with a mailing to parents of seniors, introducing them to the College Prep staff, giving the names and numbers of the teachers and the Scholarship Advisor. While this has not been done yet, parents have shown much initiative in finding the right staff and talking to them often.

FUNDING

The Scholarship Advisor and College Prep teachers are covered by tax levy and reimbursable school funds. Flexible funds from New Visions cover the costs of TestU, College Board SAT preparation books, the senior brunch, and college fair. In addition, teachers utilize Teacher's Choice funds to pay for smaller course expenses.

School Statistics: Brooklyn College Academy

*SCHOOL MISSION/VISION**

We envision Brooklyn College Academy to be a collaborative of leaders and learners. We believe that all students, staff and parents have unique leadership abilities which can be used to develop a positive learning environment characterized by high academic standards, equity and excellence. Furthermore, to be self-reliant, principled, and able to function productively in a world of diversity, each member of the community must be committed to fulfilling his or her potential through the pursuit of lifelong learning. To achieve this vision/mission, it is our intention to provide a program of academic rigor that reflects standards-driven instruction, is measured by performance-based and traditional assessments, and that meets or exceeds state graduation requirements. In addition, we will provide parents and teachers with ongoing school-based professional development needed to function as a collaborative community committed to life-long learning and success.

*SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS***

Teacher Characteristics: 32 Teachers
78.1% Fully Licensed and Permanently Assigned to this School
65.6% More than Two Years in this School
53.1% More than Five Years Teaching Experience
84.4% Masters Degree or Higher

School Characteristics:	<u>Middle School</u>	<u>High School</u>
	1.2% Eng. Language Learners	0.2% Eng. Language Learners
	3.7% White	10.5% White
	85.4% Black	74.7% Black
	7.3% Hispanic	13.1% Hispanic

3.6% Asian and others 1.6% Asian and other
47.7% Eligible for Free Lunch
92% Attendance Rate for the Middle School
91% Attendance Rate for the High School
73.7% of the Class of 2001 Graduated in Four Years***

*STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT****

English Regents Examination

Spring	Number Tested	55-100%	65-100%	85-100%
2000	95	96.8%	60.0%	1.1%
2001	110	92.7%	77.3%	5.5%

Sequential Math I Regents Examination

Spring	Number Tested	55-100%	65-100%	85-100%
2000	116	60.3%	45.7%	15.5%
2001	101	55.4%	37.6%	5.0%

Sequential Math III Regents Examination

Spring	Number Tested	55-100%	65-100%	85-100%
2000	41	82.9%	78.0%	31.7%
2001	52	76.9%	61.5%	15.4%

Biology Regents Examination

Spring	Number Tested	55-100%	65-100%	85-100%
2000	103	61.2%	35.0%	0.0%
2001	141	76.6%	56.0%	1.4%

Global Studies Regents Examination

Spring	Number Tested	55-100%	65-100%	85-100%
2000	100	93.0%	82.0%	9.0%
2001	131	91.6%	70.2%	16.8%

U.S. History and Government Regents Examination

Spring	Number Tested	55-100%	65-100%	85-100%
2000	119	41.2%	21.8%	0.8%
2001	238	47.1%	30.3%	5.0%

Language Other Than English Regents Examination

Spring	Number Tested	55-100%	65-100%	85-100%
2000	39	94.9%	92.3%	35.9%
2001	18	88.9%	66.7%	11.1%

* Obtained from the 2000-2001 CEP.

** Obtained from the 1999-2000 School Report.

*** Obtained from the 2000-2001 School Report.

EXEMPLARY COLLEGE PREPARATION AT . . .

Humanities Preparatory Academy

Vincent Brevetti, Principal
351 West 18th Street
New York, NY 10011
212.929.4433

Year started: 1997
Enrollment: 175 students
Grades: 9th-12th

OVERVIEW

Humanities Preparatory Academy offers a personalized, college preparatory learning experience to a diverse student body. Located in Manhattan, Humanities Prep accepts students who seek a personalized, college preparatory education. Many students at the school have had attendance problems or have been otherwise unsuccessful in other high school settings. The school functions as an intellectual community that models the college experience: classes are offered in a seminar format and student discussion and participation are central to the instructional program.

Humanities Prep expects all of its students to apply to and be accepted by at least one college. The school informs incoming students that applying to college is a graduation requirement. By raising student consciousness of college, the school encourages all students to view college as a viable option.

DESIGN OF THE COLLEGE PROGRAM

Humanities Prep's college program offers a set of personalized approaches and strategies that help each student develop the capacity to successfully apply to and be accepted by at least one college. The college program addresses the many aspects of the college application process, including PSAT/SAT preparation, college trips, individual college counseling, essay-writing workshops, and parent information sessions. The program is currently staffed by two college advisors. One is the school's full-time social worker who coordinates the school's guidance department and the other is a full-time teacher who has taken on the college program in addition to his contractual teaching load. Throughout the school year, the college advisors are aided by several counseling interns.

Each college advisor has a loosely defined "sphere of responsibility." One focuses on coordinating the application process for private colleges, preparation of college essays and financial aid. The other advisor focuses on coordinating the application process for CUNY and SUNY (the City and State university systems) and PSAT/SAT preparation for students. The college advisors describe themselves as incessant nags who relentlessly follow up with students on all aspects of the college application process.

All of Humanities Prep's teachers support the college advisement process by writing letters of recommendation for students (i.e., the "secondary school report" or "counselor report"). This level of teacher involvement "de-centralizes" the college application process. Students can ask the teachers with whom they feel most comfortable to write a letter. Teachers and other staff also discuss the college program during staff meetings on an as needed basis.

All seniors at the school must apply to CUNY and SUNY and are also encouraged to apply to other schools. In addition to applying to CUNY and SUNY, beginning with the 2001 - 2002 school year, all seniors will have to apply to at least two private schools and several scholarship programs. The school is also developing a "college preparation" course for the 2001 - 2002 school year, which will be a required course for seniors. The course will help students apply to colleges and scholarships.

COLLEGE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

The school's college advisement activities address different aspects of the college application process for students and parents, including PSAT/SAT preparation, college trips, individual college counseling, essay writing sessions, and parent workshops. Every September, the college advisors distribute a "College Calendar," listing all major events and deadlines, to students and their families. Each senior must schedule a meeting with a college advisor to discuss his or her college application plans. Together, the student and college advisors develop a college application plan and each student signs a contract detailing the steps s/he must take in order to successfully apply to college.

Students participate in the college preparation activities during after-school workshops and the time periods when they are scheduled to attend advisory classes. All juniors are required to take the PSATs in the Fall and the SATs in the Spring. Each senior must enroll in an afterschool SAT prep course, which meets once a week for twelve weeks, and a writing course. All seniors are required to take the SATs in the Fall. Students may discuss college-related issues at monthly "Town Meetings," attended by all students, and at the three "quad" meetings a month—groups of four advisory classes—where different topics of importance to the school community are discussed. For example, the Town Meeting is where college preparatory activities, financial aid opportunities and college acceptances are announced and school-wide discussions on the importance of college are held. Discussion issues and announcements relating to college also can be brought up during the quad meetings.

The advisors organize individual and group college preparation activities. For example, each year the entire school goes on a college visit, and on the day that juniors take the P SATs, the rest of the school goes on college visits. The school also coordinates additional college visits for groups of seniors and individual students. The college advisors send a packet containing a letter of introduction, the school profile, a course catalogue, a transcript explanation, and a class schedule to all schools where students plan to apply. The school also organizes a college application party to help students complete their applications with peer and faculty support.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRAM PLANNING

The college advisors have various opportunities to attend meetings designed to support the college preparation program, including those organized by New Visions and by other organizations. However, they do not take full advantage of these opportunities because they are needed at school.

The college advisors meet weekly to discuss the program. The amount of planning time the advisors need has decreased over time because they have developed greater awareness of the college application process. Planning

time also varies across the school year because of the cyclical nature of the application process, as does the time needed for program implementation. For example, there is a great deal of activity starting in January when college applications begin to be due.

Faculty members also have opportunities to contribute their ideas and suggestions. Planning for the college program is addressed at full staff meetings. In addition, each school year begins with a “Big Chart Meeting,” where teachers review the transcripts of potential graduates to determine whether they have a sufficient number of credits to graduate.

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Humanities Prep is a performance-based assessment school and students must successfully complete performance-based assessment tasks (PBATs) in history, science, and mathematics in order to graduate. Students must also take the English Language Arts Regents Examination. All courses offered at Prep align with the New York State Curriculum. The school has developed a course catalog and transcript explanation to help colleges understand what its students have covered in their course-work. All seniors must apply to CUNY and SUNY in order to graduate.

Students accumulate credits as they fulfill course requirements. Humanities Prep’s faculty monitor student progress to help ensure that they meet the graduation requirements. In any given semester each student is assessed three times. At the six-week mark students who are not making appropriate progress in their course-work receive a warning. Between the ninth and twelfth weeks (mid-term mark) teachers prepare a written narrative for each student in each of their classes. There is then a “final” assessment in each class. Students receive a report card with a numeric grade. If a student is not meeting his or her goals there is a student conference, followed by a parent conference, and the development of an education contract stipulating the consequences for failure to follow through with the actions required by the contract. Each phase of this process is overseen by the student’s advisor.

To help prepare students for PBATs, Prep has been phasing in “Gateway” classes. These classes help students to develop the skills needed for the more demanding PBAT classes that are typically taken by upper-level students who are working toward completing graduation requirements. Students have mentors for their PBATs as well as advisors who communicate with each other about a student’s overall progress on an as needed basis. To help ensure that students complete their PBATs, there is a tutorial for all seniors who are in this process.

There are additional supports for seniors who are at risk of not graduating and students who have attendance problems. After many interventions, if students do not make progress, and it looks like they are not going to complete the program, they are counseled to consider alternatives to Humanities Prep. The staff develops an educational plan for these students and identifies a place where they can get their diploma or GED to prevent them from dropping out of high school altogether. Some students who have left the school return on their own after receiving their diplomas to request college counseling.

College acceptance rates have been between 85% to 100% over the last four years. Last year, all but one of the school’s college-bound graduates were admitted to four-year institutions. Because this is the first year there has been

a graduating class that started in the school in the ninth grade, the school cannot yet track changes in its four-year graduation rate. While the school has not tracked student performance in college, it is interested in doing so.

ADAPTING THE PROGRAM TO FIT INDIVIDUAL STUDENT NEEDS

Humanities Prep students represent all levels of educational achievement and the school's college program responds to these different levels of achievement. The college program is highly individualized because of the school's small size and the strong staff support for the program. The school's English Language Learner (ELL) teacher and the special education coordinator work with the college advisors to support the limited number of ELL and special education students who attend the school. The special education coordinator works with parents and the school district to identify strategies that enable special education students to graduate and to select the best placements for them following high school. The school's PBATs are particularly helpful for ELL students, who often need additional help with their writing skills (as do a number of non-ELL students), because they offer students many opportunities to write and revise their work, a process which helps develop superior writing skills.

Many of the school's students have a history of truancy problems at their previous schools. The school has a system for following up with students who have attendance problems, including development of contracts, home calls and home visits. Attendance of transfers increases dramatically after one and a half semesters. The college advisors are also sensitive to students' social and economic needs and focus on New York colleges and universities that have Higher Education Opportunity Programs (HEOP), offering students a range of financial, academic, and social supports.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Starting from the beginning of the year, the college advisors hold meetings to educate parents about the college application process. Parents are provided with college applications and other materials. The college advisors also make PTA presentations about different aspects of the college application process upon request. At one meeting, for example, the advisors described the different kinds of colleges that the school's graduates attend. The college advisors are planning a more extensive parent involvement component for the 2001-2001 year (resources permitting), which will include parent workshops on the college application process.

FUNDING

The College Prep program has been supported by flexible funds provided by New Visions. Running a college program also requires a lot of "volunteer" time. Prep uses college interns—students who are enrolled in social work or college advisement programs. New York Cares provides free SAT/PSAT training. The college advisors applied for a grant to cover the costs of running the college course and parent workshops during the 2001-2002 school year.

School Statistics: Humanities Preparatory Academy

*SCHOOL MISSION/VISION**

It is our mission to provide a philosophical and practical education for all students, an education that features creativity and inquiry, encourages habitual reading and productivity, as well as self-reflection and original thought. We agree with Socrates that the “unexamined life is not worth living,” and it is our desire to prepare students to live thoughtful and meaningful lives. We are committed to inspiring the love of learning in our students. This mission can be best accomplished in a school that is a democratic community. As a democratic community, we strive to exemplify the values of democracy: mutual respect, cooperation, empathy, the love of humankind, justice for all, and service to the world. Humanities Preparatory Academy is college preparatory. Our curriculum and pedagogy prepare students for the rigors of college work and motivate them to desire and plan for a higher education. In preparing students for college we believe that we move students toward higher levels of intellectual engagement while they are in high school. It is our mission, as well, at Humanities Preparatory Academy, to provide a haven for students who have previously experienced school as unresponsive to their needs as individuals. We wish for all students to find their voice and to speak knowledgeably and thoughtfully on issues that concern their school, their world. We aid students in this endeavor by personalizing our learning situations, by democratizing and humanizing the school environment, and by creating a “talking culture”—an atmosphere of informed intellectual discourse among students and faculty.

*SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS***

- Teacher Characteristics:
 - 12 Teachers
 - 83.3% Fully Licensed and Permanently Assigned to this School
 - 50.0% More than Two Years Teaching at this School
 - 41.7% More than Five Years Teaching Experience
 - 75.0% Masters Degree or Higher
- Student Characteristics:
 - 2.9% English Language Learners
 - 30.3% White
 - 30.9% Black
 - 32.0% Hispanic
 - 6.9% Asian and other
 - 42.0% Eligible for Free Lunch
 - 82.4% Attendance Rate
 - 53.2% of the Class of 2001 Graduated After Four Years***

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT***

English Regents Examination

Spring	Number Tested	55-100%	65 - 100%	85 - 100%
2000	27	77.8%	48.1%	3.7%
2001	27	88.9%	70.4%	22.2%

* Obtained from the 2000-2001 CEP.

** Obtained from the 1999-2000 School Report.

*** Obtained from the 2000-2001 School Report.

APPENDIX

REFERENCES

Adelman, C. (1999). *Answers in the Toolbox: Academic Intensity, Attendance Patterns, and Bachelor's Degree Attainment*. Washington, DC: OERI, U.S. Dept. of Education.

Education Trust. *Transforming School Counseling: The National Initiative for Transforming School Counseling*. www.edtrust.org/main/school_counseling.asp#website.

Education Trust (1999). *Ticket to Nowhere: The Gap between Leaving High School and Entering College and High-Performance Jobs*. "Thinking K-16", Vol. 3, Issue 2. Washington, DC: Author.

National Commission on the High School Senior Year. (2001). *The Lost Opportunity of Senior Year Finding a Better Way*. Washington, DC: Author.

The College Board. *Making the most out of high school. Recommended Classes*. www.collegeboard.com/article/1,,2-7-0-106,00.html?orig=sch.

RESOURCES

Internet Resources

Bureau of Labor Statistics Career Information

<http://www.stats.bls.gov/k12>

College Access Consortium of New York

<http://www.cacny.com>

College Planning Network

<http://www.collegeplan.org>

The Education Trust

<http://www.edtrust.org>

U.S. Department of Education, "Think College"

<http://www.ed.gov/thinkcollege>

Print Resources

Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. (1996). *Great Transitions: Preparing Adolescents for a New Century*. New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York.

National Commission on the High School Senior Year. (2001). *"Raising Our Sights: No High School Senior Left Behind."* Princeton, NJ: The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation.

New Visions for Public Schools. (2000) *Citigroup College Planning Guide*. New York, NY: New Visions for Public Schools, funded by Citigroup Foundation.

Guide to School Visits

New Visions has developed this brief guide to help you as you prepare to go on school visits. We hope that it proves helpful to you.

1. SELECTING A SCHOOL TO VISIT:

You should select a school that matches your identified needs.

New Visions' Center for School Success has information on many successful and promising public schools in New York City that welcome visitors. You can find the Center for School Success at: www.newvisions.org, or contact Jody Imbimbo, the Center's director, at (212) 645-5110 for information and assistance in facilitating a visit to these schools.

In addition, you should talk to colleagues and professional experts who may know of good schools to visit.

2. PREPARING FOR A VISIT:

Be clear about the purpose of the visit. This may be your only opportunity to see the school, so plan carefully. You will get the most from your visit if you are focused on what you would like to observe and learn during your visit.

Select a team for the visit.

Think about who should go on the school visit and why they should be included. Depending on the team's goals, the team might include an assistant principal, teachers, guidance counselors, parents, and students. Assign a team leader who will be the contact person for the team and will make the arrangements for the actual school visit. Another team member should be designated the recorder for the visit. Remember to check with the hosting principal to determine how many team members may participate in the visit.

Prepare an outline of key topics and questions.

We suggest that you and your team prepare an outline of key topics and questions to help you during your visit. If possible, share your questions with the school principal before your visit. For help in thinking about key topics, please refer to Section A, Issues to Explore During a School Visit.

Review the school's Annual School Report before your visit.

The New York City Department of Education publishes Annual School Reports for each public school in the city. These reports provide important background information on the school, including student and teacher demographics and student performance data. Annual School Reports may be found on the NYC Department of Education's website: www.nycenet.edu/daa/reportcards

Determine whether you need a half-day or full-day visit.

Please see the descriptions below. Please discuss the purpose of your visit with the school principal beforehand to ensure that the agenda for your visit best reflects your team's needs and interests.

HALF-DAY VISIT

A half-day visit usually lasts between two and three hours. A half-day visitation typically begins with a meeting with the principal during which time s/he will provide a brief overview of the school and inform you about the school's mission, curriculum, and instructional program(s). You will then be given a tour of the school, which should include classrooms, administrative offices, lunch room, auditorium, gym, library/learning center, computer labs, and guidance and college advisement offices. During the tour, some schools encourage visitors to talk with students; please check with the principal to determine the school's policy. After the tour, you should have the opportunity to meet with teachers, parents, administrators and staff to ask questions and debrief.

NOTE: You may want to structure your half-day visit around the activities that you want to observe and learn about. For instance, if you want to see a professional development workshop, you may want to visit in the afternoon so that you see the after-school professional development program.

FULL-DAY VISIT

A full-day visit is generally more intensive than a half-day visit. A full-day visit should include a meeting with the principal and a brief tour. This visit, however, should allow for more in-depth observations of a particular aspect of the school. Examples of in-depth observations include opportunities to shadow a teacher or administrator, and to conduct classroom observations for a full period. During the tour, some schools encourage visitors to talk with students; please check with the principal to determine the school's policy. At the end of the school day, you should have the opportunity to meet with teachers, parents, administrators and staff to ask questions and debrief.

3. CONDUCTING A VISIT:

While you are walking around a school, try to observe tangible evidence of the school's climate and culture. Look for evidence of a welcoming environment, engaged students, and active learning. Please see Section B, What to Look For on a School Visit.

SCHOOL VISIT GUIDELINES:

Be on time. If you are going to be late, or if you will not be able to attend the school visit, call the school principal or contact person as soon as possible.

Be prepared. All team members should have copies of the agenda, the team's outline and/or questions, as well as pens and paper.

Designate a team recorder. The team should select a team recorder who will be responsible for reporting back to the entire team about the site visit.

Be respectful. You should be aware of the time and effort that your hosts put into the visit.

Be professional. Maintain professional conversation in all areas, including classrooms, hallways, and restrooms.

Do not interrupt a lesson. You are visiting a school and observing actual lessons. Do not interrupt during a class unless the teacher or principal signals that you may ask questions. If you talk to students, keep the discussion brief to avoid interrupting the planned lesson.

Debrief as a team. At the end of the visit, your team should meet to talk about what you have seen and what it means to each of you in relation to your school's plan. Debriefing can take place in a room at the school or at an off-site location.

4. FOLLOWING THE VISIT:

Report back to the team. The designated team recorder should report back on the site visit to the entire planning team. The entire team should discuss the visit in relation to the outline and questions that the team prepared prior to the visit. You should consider whether the team members observed practices that might be incorporated into your school's plan. It is also valuable to identify problems and challenges that surfaced during the visit that might be avoided or addressed by further planning.

SECTION A

ISSUES TO EXPLORE DURING A SCHOOL VISIT

RIGOROUS INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM:

Does the school provide all students with a standards-based academic curriculum (i.e., a curriculum which includes requirements for English language arts, mathematics, social studies, and laboratory sciences)?

What types of instructional approaches do teachers use to engage students?

What opportunities are available for students to think critically and become actively involved in problem-solving activities?

What strategies does the school use to encourage students to meet and exceed the standards?

PERSONALIZED RELATIONSHIPS:

How does the school structure time to support personalization (e.g., block scheduling, extended day, after school)?

How does the school structure its instructional program(s) to support personalization (e.g. houses, institutes, student advisory program)?

How does the school identify students' academic and non-academic needs? How are those needs addressed? Are additional supports and resources provided?

How does the school help students who do not meet the standards?

CLEAR FOCUS AND HIGH EXPECTATIONS:

What is the school's mission?

Does the school's mission include high expectations for all students?

Has the school organized all of its functions (including instructional program, student activities, student recruitment and admissions, staff hiring, and budget) around its mission?

How does the school evaluate its progress towards achieving the mission?

Does the school ensure that all students receive the preparation and personalized support needed to set and pursue post-high school goals?

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP:

How does the principal ensure that the school's mission shapes all of the educational programs in the school?

How does the principal exercise leadership in the areas of curriculum and student instruction?

What roles do students, parents, and staff have in school decision-making and governance?

What opportunities do teachers and other school staff have to hold leadership positions in the school?

SCHOOL-BASED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND COLLABORATION:

How does the school structure time for professional development (e.g., block scheduling, common preparatory periods, voluntary agreement to meet outside of school hours, and early release of students)?

How does the school use professional development time to focus on teaching and learning (e.g., reviewing student work, developing rubrics, reflecting, and sharing practice)?

How does the school ensure that teachers and staff receive adequate follow-up and support following professional development activities?

What structures have the school put in place to provide teachers with opportunities for peer support (e.g., teachers regularly spending time in each other's classrooms, peer coaching, mentoring, team teaching, and study groups)?

Does the school utilize any outside resources to support the professional development program (e.g., university partnerships, institutes, consultants)? If so, what types of professional development do these outside resources provide?

How do professional developers and the principal provide feedback to teachers?

MEANINGFUL CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT

How does the school assess student needs and progress over time?

In addition to standardized tests, what measures are used to assess student progress (e.g., portfolios, performance-based tasks, and teacher tests)?

How are student achievement data reviewed and analyzed?

How do teachers and staff use student achievement data to plan curriculum and instruction?

SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY AND PARENT/CAREGIVER ENGAGEMENT:

What roles do parents/caregivers and community members have in the school?

What partnerships and alliances have been created with community-based and other organizations?

What types of resources and activities are offered by the school to parents/caregivers and community members (e.g., GED programs, technology training, workshops)?

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT:

How do students participate in school decision-making and governance?

How are students' interests and needs reflected and integrated into the instructional program?

Is there a variety of extracurricular activities that address students' interests and needs, including after school and extended day programs (e.g., clubs, athletics, arts, academic enrichment)?

EFFECTIVE USE OF TECHNOLOGY:

Do curricula, lessons, and other activities use technologies that accommodate diverse learning styles, academic skills, and technology skills?

What types of opportunities do members of the school community have to expand their learning and use of technology?

Does professional development promote the effective use of technology, and is professional development delivered using technology?

Do all students have equal access to school-based technology?

SECTION B

WHAT TO LOOK FOR ON A SCHOOL VISIT

1. GENERAL SCHOOL OBSERVATIONS

School Climate

What is the climate of the school (this might include the way that students and visitors are greeted upon entry, the cleanliness/orderliness in the hallways and classrooms, and displays in the hallways)?

How do students interact with adults in the building?

How are desks arranged in classrooms (e.g., in rows, or in clusters)?

Expectations

Are there clear expectations and standards posted in classroom? Have teachers posted rubrics in their classrooms?

Are there displays of student work in the classrooms? Are they examples of good student work? How do the displays show students' individuality?

Is there visual evidence of a college preparatory culture, including a college/guidance office, college displays, and bulletin boards?

Are students comfortable asking questions of teachers?

Facilities

How are students using libraries, resource centers, and computer centers during the day and after school?

Did you notice anything in particular about "common rooms" such as the school library, gym, auditorium, and lunch room?

Are computers kept in self-contained computer labs, or are they kept in classrooms?

In schools that share a building, how do schools divide space between them? How do they share "common rooms" and hallways?

2. TYPES OF QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS (IF IT IS APPROPRIATE TO DO SO)

Knowledge and Awareness

What are you learning?

Why do you need to learn this?

What did you need to know in order to learn this?

How will this help you learn in the future?

Clear Expectations

How do you know when your work is good enough?

Do you know how to make your work better?

When you get a grade on your work, do you know why you received that grade and what it means?

What happens when you make a mistake or answer a question incorrectly?

Student Engagement

Do you get to work with classmates on tasks? If so, when and how?

Are you asked to compare concepts, strategies and skills with other students?

Do you learn from other students?

How much time do you spend at your desk?

Do you have opportunities to learn about subjects and topics that interest you?

Supports

When you are having trouble understanding something, how do you get help?

Do your teachers ask how your work is going, and if you need help?

Does your teacher offer you encouragement?

Do you have the things that you need in order to do your work?

Are you asked to compare your work with another students to learn different ways of doing the assignment?

Is there more than one right answer?



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