



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Earth School

Public School 364

**600 East 6 Street
New York
NY 10009**

Principal: Michele Haring

Dates of review: February 8 - 9, 2007

Reviewer: Carol Foresta

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall evaluation

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Earth School serves 314 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school has a very diverse ethnic mix with 34.3% percent of the students being Hispanic, 38.2% White, 17.7% Black and 9.9% Asian and others. The proportion of students newly arrived in the country, 6.7%, is in line with City schools, with most of them coming from Central America.

Approximately 7% of the school population are special education students, including those in one self-contained class. The proportion of students at 43.7% who are Title 1 eligible is above average when compared to similar schools and below average when compared to City schools. Approximately 2% of the students are identified as English language learners. At 93%, the attendance rate is similar to City schools.

This is an empowerment school. Empowerment schools have more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their school community. Empowerment schools are free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with, and benefit from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements.

This school is currently engaged in a research project to design its own periodic assessment materials.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides outstanding leadership and has very effectively shared her vision of the school with a hard working, reflective and capable staff.
- The administration and teachers know their students well, set high expectations for them and collaboratively plan inquiry based projects which support a culture of learning in all classes and across grades.
- There is close attention given to content and understanding in science, mathematics and social studies which lends support to the literacy development of students in the school.
- The school has a clear understanding of data for each student and carefully develops strategies to impact on instruction and support students who need extra help.
- Each student is respected and known well as an individual in this diverse community.
- The school functions as a democratic collaborative community, where each member has a voice and where internal expertise provides support for the ongoing development of teachers' skills.
- The careful analysis of data is used in decision making to guide improvement as demonstrated in weekly staff meetings.
- The school integrates art, music and dance into the academic experience of students providing multiple entry points into curriculum while engaging their imagination, building their self confidence and their body awareness.
- Every student has a working file which contains the various methods used to gather data, both quantitative and qualitative, as well as samples of student work used to inform extensive narrative reports given to parents.
- The school enjoys an excellent reputation in the area, and parent involvement is embraced, appreciated and well supported.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to build a program of regularly scheduled and organized teacher inter-visitations in order to build on good practice and expand and strengthen teaching skills.
- Develop a more frequent, formal classroom observation process which includes both oral and written feedback to provide greater opportunity to support and strengthen professional growth.
- Continue to develop ways to increase the school attendance rate and reduce the number of students arriving late.
- Continue to develop and monitor school assessment systems to provide a more systematic, organized and profound understanding of the impact of instruction on student growth and development.
- Continue to develop school planning to include objectively measurable goals to monitor success.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well developed school.

Earth School is a very effective school. The principal and assistant principal are talented, experienced educators who share a common vision and lead a strong and capable faculty who know their students well and set high expectations for them to raise achievement. The school looks at student work and process thoroughly and has detailed and insightful knowledge into how children think and learn.

The school functions as a community of learners. Teachers effectively model for their students a respectful attitude towards questioning, thinking and learning. The staff values and treats every student as an individual with great potential, resulting in instruction that is differentiated and well matched to students' needs. The feedback which teachers give to students and parents is impressive in its detail. One parent remarked, "Teachers are the out-of-family experts on our kids."

The teachers and administrators use qualitative and quantitative data very well to monitor and analyze students' progress. As a result there have been several initiatives undertaken by the school to enhance this process and make it more accessible and systematic. However, not all of these initiatives are implemented across all grades and subjects. Professional development is undertaken at staff meetings and is effective.

Parents are actively involved in the school, support its mission and goals and believe that their school is a collaborative community. They believe their students are respected and that they are empowered to add their voice to any discussion of plans being made by the school. However, school planning is not yet clearly focused on the use of data to monitor the planning process.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The teachers and administrators look deeply and thoughtfully at student progress through their work and through their observation of their work habits. Teachers are trained in a method called descriptive review and in the creation and use of rubrics, observation and note taking to build a detailed understanding of student achievement. Understanding is further enhanced through the utilization of a wide range of other assessments, for example, Early Childhood Language Acquisition (E-CLAS), Teachers College benchmarks and standardized tests. There is good evidence of conferencing with students and parents. As the descriptive review system is so new it is difficult to judge its impact on the school.

The detailed knowledge the school has of each student is used well to monitor the performance of special education students, students identified as being in need and English language learners. For example, the working files initiative where each student

has their own file containing all the available quantitative and qualitative data, clearly details student performance. In addition, special education students have files which include reports written by their various specialist and intervention teachers. The monitoring of specific student groups, for example by ethnicity, is less well developed.

The school has begun the process of measuring its own performance and progress across grades and classes. However, except for one mathematics pilot, the school does not compare its progress with other similar schools.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student’s next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student’s learning.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

The school uses its analysis of data to take action for improvement. The principal and the assistant principal use the information effectively to guide decision-making and to determine the next steps for the school. Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole, individual students and academic subjects. Planning for these goals and their implementation is supported by Teachers College, “Math in the City” and Long Island University. The teachers focus on the benchmarks and assessments that come from these groups.

Teachers and administrators monitor student progress and improvement plans in great detail. The curriculum is customized by the teachers to accommodate the growth and development of the students as individual learners.

Students having difficulties are put into groups with specific targeted remediation and with support staff to assist them. If necessary, special education teacher support services (SETTS) and other staff intervene very effectively to raise achievement. Support personnel create packets of student work to help special education students and other students who are having difficulties in particular curricular areas. These packets contain tools which remind students of coherent strategies they can use and are effective in improving classroom work.

Parents feel that teachers and administrators know their children very well and do all they can to improve student performance. The extensive narrative reports they receive and the conferences which are 30 minutes long and formally held three times a year, help to make the parents feel they are partners in the work of the school. Many parents volunteer their time to help teachers in their classes or to give their expertise to the school to improve student performance and progress. High expectations are held for all students, yet there is no pressure to make students feel as if they are being judged by the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

With the environment and social studies as the base, a core curriculum has been developed for each age group. These studies extend and integrate all traditional academic areas such as literacy and mathematics very well. Students learn effectively

through their active, hands on participation in projects which are exhibited in every classroom of the school. For example, in one combined 4th and 5th grade class, the students had just completed a study of the Puritans. Frequent field trips are clearly focused on the curriculum and support learning very well. Instruction is designed very effectively to promote self confidence, a sense of competence and a love of learning and reflects the abilities and individual interests of the students.

The curriculum is customized by the teachers to accommodate the growth and development of the students as individuals. For example, following research, the staff have used a pilot lesson plan study with their school and another school in their building to rework the mathematics curriculum. Teachers are held accountable through weekly and monthly meetings during which staff look at curriculum and student work closely to assess the work and progress of students.

Staff members at all grade levels assume responsibility for assessing and analyzing student progress and for planning interventions according to need. However, some teachers are more effective in this process than others. The more experienced teachers are mentoring the new teachers in the process through modeling what needs to be done in order to ensure the success for all students.

Due to the careful alignment of instruction to student need, students are actively engaged in their learning and are not frustrated when their work is difficult. For example, in mathematics, small groups are challenged at their own level of understanding with differentiated problems.

The analysis and use of data is central to decision making in the school. Budget, staffing and scheduling decisions are all firmly based on documented student needs. Careful attention is paid to using staff talents and strengths to the best advantage. An example of this is the use of their science and art cluster teachers. Every student in the school takes science and art each week.

Attendance is recognized as a priority in the school. The school is focused on improving attendance and reducing lateness but they are not there yet.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

A personnel committee carefully selects a diverse staff based upon a wide range of criteria that includes a willingness to work collaboratively, intelligence, demonstrated practice and a respect for children and childhood. Staff must also have a sense of themselves as learners and have a progressive approach to education.

All professional development is designed to improve instruction and assessment practices, including the use of data to customize instruction. Professional development is on-going and predominantly relies on internal expertise during scheduled meetings, and focuses on how students think and learn. Teachers do not routinely visit each other's classes, resulting in effective practice not being shared fully.

Each week, the principal and assistant principal do informal class observations with oral feedback to the teachers. However, a more formal and systematic classroom observation

process with constructive, written feedback is not in place. Despite this, the administrators know the strengths and areas for development of all teachers.

The principal is highly respected and viewed as being approachable, supportive, knowledgeable and available but with a “no nonsense” manner. She has built a collaborative and democratic school and knows every student in the well.

The school is well organized and functions well. The parents are highly appreciative of the school. For example, they like the fact that the school respects all the students and makes learning, based upon problem solving, fun and relevant to community and that the students learn from each other. Strong links to community partnerships benefit the students and provide for an enriched cultural environment in the school.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The principal, the assistant principal and the agenda committee are the leadership for the school. They are competent and resourceful in their approach to school planning and are flexible when issues arise, resulting in changes being made. School plans and interventions are reviewed regularly for their effectiveness.

The analysis and use of data has begun to be an integral part of the school’s strategies for short- and long-term whole-school improvement. Many recent improvements are due to the increasing use of data to guide instruction and determine students learning needs in a systematic, organized way. However, plans tend not to have objective measures of success or interim, data-led goals. Although planning for individual student progress is effective, insufficient focus is given to progress between grades or to monitoring that all initiatives are carried out universally throughout the school.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Earth School (PS 364)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score			X

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each student, classroom, grade level, 			X
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 			X
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all other categories of interest to the school* 			X
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.		X	
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.			X
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.			X
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.			X
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.		X	
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.		X	
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.			X
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.		X	
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X	