



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Gregorio Luperon High School for Science and
Mathematics**

**High School 552
516 – 20 West 181 Street
New York
NY 10033**

Principal: Juan Villar

Dates of review: March 22 – 23, 2007

Reviewer: Jill Bavin

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 Gregorio Luperon School was originally founded in 1992 as a one year only language transition program for newly arrived Spanish speaking students. In June 2001 the school became an articulated diploma granting high school for students from Grade 9 through 12. The school's prime aim is still to nurture, challenge and prepare newly arrived English language learners to achieve well. The student population of 413 is 100% Hispanic. Almost 100% join Grade 9 having recently arrived in the country and have no spoken English at all. Almost all the students are title 1 eligible. The proportion of special education students is less than one per cent. Most students come from the Dominican Republic, but some students also come from Mexico and Peru.

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.

The principal has led the school since soon after its inauguration and also led the transition program before the school was founded as a high school. His cabinet is a new team, with three assistant principals being hired within the last twelve months. There is a larger proportion of experienced teachers in the school than is typical of City schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is highly respected by staff, students and parents.
- The curriculum is very well aligned to support students through the transition from learning in Spanish to learning in English.
- The principal has very high expectations of himself, of staff and of students.
- There is a well-structured and comprehensive professional development program with a strong focus on student outcomes.
- A very effective program of lesson observations includes teachers in 'learning walks'.
- The school is well managed on a day-to-day basis and students feel very safe in school.
- There is a high level of staff accountability.
- Budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions are closely linked to meeting students' needs.
- Students benefit from extremely wide links with the community.
- There is an effective system of faculty meetings that include inter-disciplinary groups.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend the use of data to make more comparisons of progress between different groups of students.
- Develop manageable short term action plans to measure the success of interim plans and interventions.
- Further develop differentiation through a wider range of instruction strategies in the classroom.
- Ensure that teachers' feedback to students on a piece of work routinely explains what the student has done well and identifies the next step to improve the work.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The Gregorio Luperon High School has retained its well-established focus on supporting Latino students new to the USA while accommodating significant changes in its administration. The principal is trusted and respected by faculty and passionate about enhancing the life chances for his students. The new cabinet is already working effectively as a team with a shared vision for students, and, together with the principal, has a clear understanding of where students' learning is better. The school's culture of commitment to the students' well-being is strong although some of its procedures for tracking and analyzing students' performance and progress are new and have not yet had time to have a full impact.

Parents and students value the work of the principal and the school. They are confident that the school is doing its best to help students achieve academically, and particularly appreciate the 'family' culture that means students feel very safe in school. Students enjoy school and the wide range of enrichment activities available to them. They are very conscious that the school is doing more than help them academically, but also helping them to be, as several expressed it, 'good people'.

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 proficient.

The school rightly prioritizes establishing a baseline of students' skills urgently at the beginning of Grade 9 to make up for the shortfalls in academic information that arrives with students. The school tests students in Spanish and uses the information to group them according to their academic needs. This important procedure is followed by careful and close classroom observation so that decisions are not dependent upon a one-day performance, which may not fairly reflect the students' potential. Thereafter, students' progress is closely monitored at the end of each six-week marking period through discussion between teaching staff and assistant principals or the principal at weekly 'grade meetings'. Through these effective systems student progress is regularly monitored. No time has been lost in organizing the new administration team to make a significant contribution to this process. They have specific subject responsibilities and meet weekly with their designated departments to track student progress closely. Consequently the school keeps a close and constantly updated track of how well each student, class and grade is progressing.

The school now holds much data about students' performance and progress, and has done for the past academic year. Systems for analyzing and sharing this information are developing well with the new administration team. The school's strong commitment to

equality and the best possible school experience for every student has resulted in the comparison of the performance of different groups of students developing in a way that is relevant to the school. The school understands that skills vary according to students' prior experience, including the detrimental affect for many students of their education being interrupted by moving to a new country. This understanding is not fully documented in the current systems for analysis. The school has made a good start to using data to identify common patterns of weakness in students' test responses and to compare performance between students in different classes. As a result the administration is very clear about where students' learning is best in each subject. However, while it knows that girls outperform boys, overall, it has yet to look at the data more closely to determine by how much and where the greatest or least disparities lie. Similarly, while recognizing the particular needs of students who have experienced interrupted schooling, the school has not yet formalized its analysis of data to determine how this group performs best.

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 proficient.

The principal's high aspirations for all students underpin the challenging goals set for the whole school in collaboration with staff, who are therefore largely supportive of the school's drive for continued improvement. Goals for the percentage of students to pass each subject are also shared with students and parents, contributing to the school's strong message of high expectations for all. Parents and students know that this is a school that wants the best for its students. Parents appreciate the open door policy and the accessibility of the principal and staff. They feel very well informed about, and pleased with their child's progress.

Assessment information is used to generate realistic but challenging targets for students to achieve in their upcoming tests and progress is measured over marking period timeframes. Improvements in outcomes are identified in the Comprehensive Education Plan. These are based upon a realistic appraisal of students' performance to date. The school routinely uses its knowledge of students' skills to group them into homogeneous classes so that teaching strategies can be more readily planned to meet the needs of the class. These meetings contribute to effective planning for individual, class and grade interventions and scheduling that reflect student need. The school is highly effective in responding to those students in need of greatest help. For example, they have a specially convened class of the lowest performing students and in addition to extra tuition in the mandated subjects provide a comprehensive enrichment program of experiences and activities to increase students' sense of self-worth and their motivation.

The whole school community is working effectively together, with the benefit of the new administration team, to enhance students' learning. Although class teachers have a good understanding of their students' strengths and areas for development they do not always communicate individual goals clearly on a student's piece of work. Comments often celebrate work without indicating what has worked well, and when this is made clear teachers seldom identify the next step for further improvement in the work. Nevertheless, students are well supported overall and feel they are learning well.

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.

The school faces the challenge of accelerating students’ learning so that, ideally, within four years, they can move from not speaking or writing English to reaching sufficient proficiency in the mandated subjects to graduate. The school has, therefore, restructured and fine-tuned the curriculum extremely well to introduce and re-visit knowledge and concepts, in order to effect this transition. The essential level of scaffolding within the curriculum is supported by very individualized scheduling, much appreciated by students, which contributes significantly to a system of differentiation according to students’ needs. Although homogeneous grouping reduces the breadth of ability within a class, teachers miss opportunities to extend differentiation further by setting different challenges for different students within a class. An analysis of learning class by class holds teachers highly accountable for the quality of their work and student outcomes. Consequently the principal recognizes that a few teachers need further help in reaching his high standards.

The administration shares a very strong determination within the school to make budgetary and staffing decisions according to student need. This is exemplified in the decision to finance and staff a special class for students who have experienced interrupted formal education. The school takes its responsibility for extending students’ horizons and their need to communicate in English very seriously. As a result there is an extensive program of visits and trips, some of which take students abroad. The combination of the classroom curriculum and this wider program is highly effective in engaging and motivating the vast majority of students. Students are entirely confident that the staff are working for their academic and wider good. They describe the school as like a ‘family’ and have several adults to turn to with any problem. While the student rate of attendance is much better than the City average, parents and students testify to the school’s determination not to be in any way complacent in this regard. There are rigorous procedures for contacting families at the first indication of lateness or absence.

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.

Decisions about the hiring of faculty and the balance of curriculum reflect the school’s analysis of student performance. The principal has a wide field of applicants and takes a sound collaborative approach to appointing staff. He is still refining selection procedures and plans to include the requirement for a demonstration lesson when the school next conducts interviews. The very well balanced program for professional development deepens understanding of data analysis and meets individual teacher needs while also supporting special projects such as action research into the needs of students who have experienced interrupted formal education. This program is very effectively supported by the involvement of class teachers in learning walks with the administration. Teachers find the thorough and regular program of classroom observations by the principal and, this year, the assistant principals to be helpful and constructive. Written feedback that is personal to a teacher is given confidentially. However, general learning points from

several learning walks are shared with the entire school community, including the security personnel, kitchen staff and janitor. This is an outcome of the principal's philosophy that it takes an entire school to educate a child. It contributes to the smooth running of the school and its culture of shared responsibility.

The assistant principals are just beginning a process of inter-visitation that is a natural development from the well conceived inter-disciplinary staff meetings that have begun this year. Their contribution has enhanced the school's systems for sharing data and decision making. The combination of this and the principal's well established culture of high expectations of staff participation and mutual respect means that there is already a very strong expectation that staff will candidly evaluate themselves and others. This year they have more information upon which to base their evaluations and more opportunities to share ideas than ever before.

The school is well managed and the principal is highly respected by all members of the school community. His commitment to students, and his determination that they will experience success, underpins his capacity to lead continued development and improvement. He is an effective communicator within the school community and beyond. Students benefit from his huge network of community links. One example of many is the group of girls who had witnessed or suffered domestic violence, whose learning was suffering. They received a special computer course from the Northern Manhattan Women's Development Centre, providing them with a safe forum for dealing with issues while increasing their computer skills, and getting their academic progress back on track.

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 school's Comprehensive Education Plan clearly outlines the school's strategic goals to be achieved by the end of the year. These goals correlate with data about cohort specific student progress and so have an authenticity beyond merely notional increases in performance. Because the school reviews its performance and modifies its action accordingly, progress towards identified targets is clearly measurable and informs subsequent plans. For example, the school knows that 47% of its students are already performing at a graduation level, and that it has already met its target for mathematics for the year. However, not all interim goals, such as 'meeting the needs of incoming freshman more accurately' are equally measurable and, therefore, easy to evaluate and rapidly revise.

Regular monitoring is shared with departments and teachers so the whole school knows, for example, that they need to raise the performance of seventeen students in order to reach the English Language and Arts target. The school's procedures for sharing information through grade and subject meetings mean that there is an effective link between strategic administration planning and classroom practice. Because meetings are regular and goals are clear, the school makes a rapid and flexible response to addressing areas of need. However, in this respect practice exceeds what is documented. Rapid response planning is seldom reflected in written supplementary action plans that would ensure that small steps towards a goal are identified and help to measure success.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Gregorio-Luperon High School for Science and Mathematics (HS 552)	∅	✓	+
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	