



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Gateway School for Environmental Research and
Technology**

**High School 295
1980 Lafayette Avenue
Bronx
NY 10473**

Principal: Cliff Siegel

Dates of review: November 13 - 14, 2006

Reviewer: Martin Groucutt

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 Gateway School for Environmental Research and Technology is currently in its fourth year as a high school at the Stevenson campus in the Bronx. It is a New Century High School founded under the New Visions grant and has 386 enrolled students from grades 9 through 12, the first of which will graduate this year. Its lead partner organization is the Gateway Institute for Pre-College Education, with whom it has an active relationship.

The school population comprises 52.1% Hispanic students, 40.2% Black, 5.9% Asian and other and 21.8% White. There are 13.5% special education students and 13.5% English language learners. The school qualifies for Title 1 funding. Over the last full academic year attendance stood at 89.9%, above that of similar schools (85.1%) and City schools (82.5%). It is judged to be a school in good standing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal, ably assisted by his assistant principal, has brought a clear vision.
- There are good relationships between staff and students based on a mutual respect.
- There are effective links with the lead partner, Gateway Institute for Pre-College Education, to help prepare students for the rigors of college life.
- There is a clear mission statement that underpins the work of the school.
- There are excellent procedures for encouraging regular attendance.
- The classrooms are welcoming places that are supportive learning environments.
- Banners around the hallways encourage a positive commitment from students.
- There are positive links with the other schools on the campus.
- There is an open door policy, which makes parents feel welcome.
- Instructional leaders encourage reflection on the whole process of education.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop assessment policies that always state how a piece of work can be further improved.
- Display clear rubrics around the school, on bulletin boards and in student folders to provide constant visual reinforcement about standards.
- Develop the use of technology across the curriculum to strengthen teaching and learning, providing professional support where needed.
- Provide a range of extension materials so that the highest achieving students are challenged constantly.
- Provide more advice and support on teaching special education students and English language learners across all grades.
- Develop more large visual displays in classrooms and hallways that highlight specifically the school's environmental and technology focus.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school, with some well developed features.

The school's clear mission statement provides a vision and focus for its activities, aimed at empowering students to appreciate the environment in which they live and social justice issues that affect their lives. This mission statement was developed by the administration, faculty, students, parents and lead partner to create a common ownership.

Working effectively with their lead partner organization, The Gateway Institute for Pre-College Education, the school is seeking to ensure that all its students are prepared successfully for the academic rigors of college life in the future. This is reinforced by banners displayed around the hallways which promote positive messages.

As a campus school, Gateway maintains positive relationships with the six other schools on the site. The Campus Council meets regularly to enable plan programming so that all schools can share the common spaces equitably. This enables Gateway to be a place where teaching and learning goes on effectively. However, there is a very real practical problem in that the building does not have enough electrical power to enable technology to be deployed to the full and the wireless connection for the school's computers has been removed during building alterations. This has limited the opportunities available for students to use computers for learning, or for undertaking research.

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 makes effective use of the data tool developed by the District that provides information covering attendance, special education requirements, cohort classification, credits earned, Regents scores and proficiency levels for all students. The tool has been used to create a detailed spreadsheet which brings together information on individual students that was not previously available in a single document. Under the auspices of New Visions, school leaders have embarked on an action research project with a view to developing a campus-wide strategy for promoting credit recovery, leading directly to the extended-day program that has subsequently been implemented. This has enabled data to be acquired in which the campus schools were able to look at their own performance and use data to provide information that enables teachers to develop interventions that target students' individual needs. Of the 96 students who were enrolled for the extended-day program in The Gateway School, 87% achieved credit recovery. However, data is not yet used to make direct comparisons between different groups of students by gender or ethnicity.

Teachers generate their own data throughout the year from quizzes, tests, written reports and projects, as well as from evaluating overall participation in lessons. This is set against the information on daily attendance, so that judgments on the effect of this on overall performance can be made. This means that data on individual students is being

supplemented throughout the year and enables teachers to understand the performance and progress of the students that they teach. Data has shown an increasing number of students entering the school, particularly in this year's 9th grade, who are English language learners or are special education students. The progress of these students is beginning to be tracked carefully and staffing has been strengthened through the deployment of teachers with expertise in this area.

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.

Data shows the progress being made towards graduation by all students. This will be the first graduating year for the school and 80% of the students in the first cohort are on track to graduate, though this seems likely to decline in successive years judging by the current performance of students at the lower grade levels. The challenge for the school is to address this situation. It is looking at the strategies set out by New Visions for targeted interventions for students shown to be 'Almost on track' and 'Off track' as a way of supporting individual progress and in this way to develop measurable goals to support increasing achievement over time. As a way of targeting specific resources to the students in greatest need, the school is using its two special education teachers to work with the much weaker 9th grade. However, this is leaving the other grades under-resourced and special education students are not getting the specialist help that they need.

A scholarship report is used to show the scores of each individual student by teaching group. This allows the school not only to see the scores of students, but also to look at the effectiveness of instruction throughout the school. The evidence showing areas of individual weakness is used to target intervention strategies for those considered to be at risk. Data therefore focuses on the school as a whole, and the quality of instruction throughout the school, while at the same time the progress of individuals, particularly those identified as needing additional support, is identified and addressed. The school does not currently display marking rubrics clearly around the school and an important opportunity to reinforce standards in students' minds is therefore lost.

Parents and students identify the open door policy of the school as a strength. It not only maintains good links with home, but also encourages a dialogue on needs and progress that allows teachers to develop a good understanding of the students they teach.

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 proficient.

The school has a clear focus around technology and the environment and this is reflected in instructional activities and resources, though there is not much evidence in the banners, which concentrate on general school engagement.

The scholarship reports generated three times a year hold teachers accountable for improving the outcomes of their students. Teachers group students within classes, though

this does not extend to individual differentiation. There was no sign of extension work that could be undertaken by the higher achieving students in teaching groups to increase the numbers of students who are able to progress beyond level 3.

In a small school such as this, there is comparatively little flexibility in staffing, or budgeting. However, the principal does try to use resources to promote the stated aims of the school. At times this is a real challenge, such as in the decision to deploy special education expertise in the 9th grade, leaving other, less needy parts of the school, comparatively under-resourced.

Scheduling of extended-day instruction enables the school to address the needs of its at-risk students through opportunities for recovering subject credits and/or Regents credits. Regents preparation is also provided, although the school is finding that attendance for extended-day activities is problematic. A successful sports academy took place during the summer, which was also a hook for encouraging credit recovery. As a result, students identified as being at risk who attended regularly made good progress and showed clear gains in performance.

A real strength of the school is the effort that it puts into promoting good attendance. First day contact and home visits emphasize the importance of being in school and as a result around 90% of the students are usually in attendance, well above the City average of 82.5% at these grade levels. This also connects with the positive engagement in learning that the students feel and the support that they get from their teachers.

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 proficient.

The principal has established a clear focus and vision for the school and is well supported by his assistant principal in developing this. As a result of the continued expansion to its full capacity the school has been able to appoint two lead teachers, one each for English language arts and mathematics. While undertaking some teaching, they are also acting as coaches and mentors, and supporting teacher professional development in those areas identified as being necessary for improving student outcomes. This has the potential to help raise the standards of teaching and learning even higher.

The principal and assistant principal undertake regular formal and informal classroom observations. Subsequently, letters making supportive suggestions for improving practice and praising effective teaching are sent to those who have been observed. As a result the principal is aware of the strengths of the teachers, and areas where the school might benefit from opportunities for professional development. This has not yet been further refined into the development of planning to address the professional development needs of individual teachers, which would support them in becoming more effective in helping their students to maximize their potential.

Teachers get opportunities to meet together in teams at both subject and grade levels and this helps to promote consistency in curriculum coverage. On the whole, teachers show a good grasp of their subject matter, and the students appreciate this and the individual care they receive. Classrooms are effective learning environments, displaying a good amount of students' work, which in turn encourages students to want to produce work of high quality. The school runs smoothly as procedures are consistently followed.

There are good opportunities to work with outside services, much of which give direct support to the school's environmental focus. Among these are opportunities to get involved with the City Park Ranger program, the Botanical Gardens, the Bronx River preservation and the 'Rocking the Boat' group. These opportunities strengthen the environmental curriculum.

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.

Instructional leaders and teachers are reflective about the process of teaching and learning. This includes how the school might best meet its goals of increasing environmental awareness and encouraging students to become socially aware citizens, but also about how students learn and the different types of intelligences that they display.

The data collected on individual student performance as the year moves on enables the school to maintain an awareness of progress and areas of concern. The lead partner organization, The Gateway Institute, visits the school to work with teachers in providing professional development to support best practices. Teachers have the opportunity to meet in teams to look at issues around improvement planning and teaching practices in twice monthly sessions lasting for the whole afternoon. This builds in flexibility and enables the school to measure the progress of plans and interventions. Informal data on progress, coupled with the effective use of scholarship reports at the end of the marking periods, creates information throughout the year that can be used to amend planning or teaching to ensure that students gain the maximum benefit. As a result, teachers have a good picture of progress and students are able to benefit because their learning needs are being addressed. However, assessments do not include sufficient developmental comments, so that students are not clear how to improve the quality of their work.

Information acquired during the year on progress is analyzed carefully, with a particular focus on those students identified as being at risk. However, there is not so much focus on developing strategies for improving the outcomes of students currently at level 3, leading to fewer students achieving level 4. Having recently completed the first marking period and analyzed the results, a range of strategies are to be introduced; for example, one-to-one counseling, parent outreach work and referral to the guidance counselor where this is deemed to be needed. This reflects the school's clear attention to focus even more on the needs of individuals.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Gateway School for Environmental Research and Technology (HS 295)	∅	✓	+
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	