



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Global Enterprise Academy

**High School 541
925 Astor Avenue
Bronx
NY 10469**

Principal: Richard Levine

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Reviewer: Mike Sutton

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Global Enterprise Academy opened in 2003 when several smaller high schools were created from a single large school. It serves the Pelham Parkway area of the Bronx, although a significant number of students come from outside the immediate vicinity, with some traveling long distances to the school. The school shares the building with two other schools. The library, cafeteria and some teaching areas are shared with one of them. As an Enterprise Academy, the school has a focus on business studies and economics.

There are 410 students enrolled from grade 9 through grade 12. Hispanic students make up 58%, Black 38% and White and other groups the remaining 4%. Around 86% of the students receive Title I funding which is higher than for City-wide or similar schools. Substantially, more students are enrolled or leave during the course of the school year than for similar schools. Attendance at 75% is much lower than for similar or City-wide schools.

Of the school population, 27% are special education students. Although the home language for many students is Spanish, the great majority speaks English fluently and only 8% of the students are English language learners.

In September 2006, the school opted to become 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.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal leads by example in his deep care of the students, their families and his staff and has a vision for how he wants the school to develop.
- There is a very positive climate of care and concern for all the students, with staff having a strong understanding of the social and emotional needs of each student.
- There are some examples of very good practice in the school and many members of staff go to considerable extra lengths to help their students.
- The team responsible for helping students make up lost ground is proving very effective.
- The school is creating effective structures to develop student leadership.
- The school is placing a very strong emphasis on improving attendance.

What the school needs to improve

- Set out clear, strategic plans to ensure that the school's aims and the ways they will be achieved are fully understood by all staff, students and parents.
- Draw up clear, precise curriculum frameworks for each subject to set out what is expected to be taught and learned in each grade.
- Ensure that staff are consistent in their approach in supporting students' portfolio work.
- Ensure more consistent collection and analysis of data on students' achievement, so that the school has a much clearer understanding of where it needs to improve further.
- Raise the impact of professional development by tying it more precisely to strategic development.
- Make more use of regular assessment to raise the level of challenge presented in lessons, particularly to the higher achieving students.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is an undeveloped school.

The school has overcome many of its initial problems, particularly those of poor student behavior. Its philosophy of developing students socially and emotionally is starting to bear fruit. Students are becoming adept at working with and supporting one another through the work of the student government and the student leadership group. The senior students increasingly regard their time at the school as a positive experience, both educationally and personally.

There are pockets of really good practice. Several teachers constantly assess students' progress and plan new work on the basis of what these assessments show. The team that helps students who have fallen a long way behind their peers is having substantial impact in assisting those students to catch up. More students are better placed to graduate as a result. The intervention team that supports those students who have particular personal problems, are dedicated and proving increasingly effective.

However, the bigger picture is of a school which has yet to fully establish its overall aims and the means by which to deliver them. In tackling the many urgent issues in its first few years, the school has not given sufficient attention to strategic planning. There is a lack of clarity amongst staff about what the priorities are or in some cases which activities are mandatory and which are optional. Development planning is piecemeal and each subject team is working without any clear, overarching plan to steer them. Professional development is not driving school improvement as well as it should because there is no clear rationale for what needs to be provided.

The lack of organized, strategic collection of data on students' achievements and progress is a fundamental weakness. As a result, the school relies too heavily on a subjective view of which grades, classes, subjects or groups of students are doing best or worst. It lacks the key management information necessary to improve teaching, raise achievement and inspire students to learn.

The school has acknowledged many of its shortcomings and is starting to look, critically at information on students' progress. A concerted, sustained drive is necessary to ensure that this approach becomes fully integrated.

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 undeveloped.

The school has no clear procedures for the regular collection of data on students' achievements. What is collected is done individually by teachers but there is inconsistency in this across the school. A few teachers gather substantial data from detailed on-going daily assessments. These build to give a very clear picture of the students' strengths and weaknesses which are shared with the individuals concerned. The students say they like this sort of assessment as it enables them to see regularly how well they are doing and that the overall grades they receive are fair and equitable. Although most teachers keep records of what their students achieve in class or complete for homework, there is no coherent structure to this to enable information to be easily gathered and analyzed.

There is a widespread sharing of knowledge about students at the different advisory and grade team meetings. The strengths and weaknesses of individuals are discussed, focusing strongly on their social and emotional needs. These are regarded as paramount and good use is made of the team of intervention staff to offer support and guidance. The assessment of students' academic progress in these meetings is less rigorous. There is too little accurate recording of information and there are inadequate written records of what is discussed at most meetings.

As part of its empowerment status the school has invested in a commercial assessment package. Teachers have started to use this, but the process is new and is not yet an effective tool for raising students' achievements, which are currently too low. The school is poorly placed to consider how well it is doing year to year, or against other schools. It cannot with accuracy, set targets for improvement either as a whole school or by subject, grade or for particular groups of students. The assistant principal has targeted this aspect of development work for attention and is starting to assemble the necessary data.

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 undeveloped

The lack of coherent gathering of data over time is a substantial barrier to development and improvement. The school has only a subjective view about how well different groups of students are doing. For example, it feels that there is an imbalance between the achievement between the gender groups but cannot quantify this. It is therefore in a weak position to determine what measures might be needed to reduce any gap or gauge how effective these might be.

There are recent positive features. The school has determined through data analyzed by the New Visions partner organization how many students have fallen behind in obtaining credits needed for graduation. The school's credit recovery program is based around this information. A small group of staff has been given the responsibility of reducing this number, though all were involved in discussions around its introduction. The group is

keeping precise records which show that they are making significant inroads and more students are now on course to graduate as a result. The school also has received recent information which shows the achievements of students, broken down by subjects and classes. There has not yet been any definitive analysis or action based on this substantial management data.

The teachers work hard to insist on high standards from their students. However, because the school has insufficient data on which to base interim and longer term goals, teachers do not know with sufficient clarity, where best to focus their efforts and the efforts of their students to bring about most improvement.

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 undeveloped with some proficient features.

The school follows the mandated curriculum. It also asks students to submit a number of portfolios in order to receive full credit for their class. The practice of moving students up to 10th grade course work despite the number of credits they have is a research based practice that has been introduced. Evidence is pointing to the initiative being successful.

The school promotes students’ personal and academic development through the use of portfolios which students submit and defend in front of an assessment panel. There is wide inconsistency in the degree to which teachers insist on portfolio presentations or on their students achieving credits. Some staff put huge efforts into ensuring that the students in their advisory groups submit portfolios. Others do not. The team responsible for organizing the assessment of students’ portfolios has many positive development ideas for this aspect of the curriculum but it is hindered by the lack of strategic direction for their work.

The school has aligned its spending and staff scheduling with its aim of small classes and consistency of teacher and advisory leaders over a two-year period. This works well in as much as students and teachers get to know one another very well and build good relations which promote strong social and emotional development. The students feel safe and say they always have several adults to whom they could turn for advice or if in difficulty. Staff are increasingly aware of students’ academic needs and for those most in need of extra help there is good support from the intervention team and through additional classes.

The school’s approach to scheduling requires some teachers to teach subjects outside of their immediate area of experience. The school has no clear mechanism for evaluating the impact of its scheduling decisions on staff professional development needs or on students’ achievements.

There is a wide variation in the quality of teaching, from some which is high quality to a significant amount which fails to sufficiently motivate or inspire students. A minority of teachers plan in great depth, making full use of their assessments to differentiate their work well. Their lessons engage students fully, generating good quality outcomes as seen in some of their creative writing in English and work in history. Other lessons set students work which is too general for the range of their abilities. As a result, some of the higher achieving students coast along doing very little.

The school has worked hard to halt the steady downward drift in levels of students' attendance. Policies and strong procedures are firmly in place to address this but the school has not considered alternative strategies to complement these.

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 undeveloped with some proficient features.

The school selects teachers on the basis of their commitment to its philosophy of developing students socially and emotionally as a necessity for academic progress. The teachers also know that they will teach two main subjects. Much initial work when the school opened went into developing the social and emotional side of the school's work with students and in tackling unacceptable behavior. In this the school has been successful and behavior is now largely satisfactory. The social and emotional needs of students are well understood and provided for but the teachers' understanding of their responsibilities for assessment and analysis of students' achievements is much less secure.

In its scheduling, the school has set aside good levels of time for staff to meet in teams. Planning takes place in grade and subject teams and focuses strongly on coverage of the curriculum. It does not sufficiently address general weaknesses in students' achievements because subject groups have too little evaluative assessment information to steer them. They also lack sufficient information about other aspects of achievement such as differences between different ethnic groups, grades or genders.

Most professional development takes place in subject teams with staff sharing useful knowledge and expertise, particularly over teaching difficulties encountered with individual students. The subject leaders have too little information about students' achievements to systematically structure professional development.

The principal observes teachers periodically and knows where most improvement is needed. However, other key leaders have had too few opportunities as yet, to contribute to this school-wide evaluation. Within grades and subject groups, teachers take opportunities that arise to observe and share teaching with each other. The students' benefit as different skills and knowledge are brought to the lesson but as a staff development tool, the approach lacks strategic direction. There has been too little professional development aimed at improving the quality of teaching.

The principal is respected by students and parents. Those who have been involved since the school's opening point to the considerable improvements it has made under his leadership. These improvements indicate that the school has the capacity to improve.

The senior students feel strongly that the school is increasingly meeting their needs and the portfolio system prepares them well for college life. They also feel that inconsistencies in approaches by staff limit the effectiveness of this system and send mixed messages to the younger students.

On a day to day basis the school runs smoothly. The staff are vigilant at transition times and core routines such as for discipline and attendance are well understood and used.

The school makes use of a range of outside organizations to support its work particularly to build its work as an Enterprise Academy. There is a great deal of good work being done by the parent coordinator to build relationships with parents, often through innovative ideas such as a father and son dinner evening. This has grown in popularity and has led to the formation of a hiking group. The development of a student leadership group has also had some very positive benefits. Those involved have a mature attitude to work and mutual support.

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 undeveloped.

Much has been accomplished in setting up the new school and the right issues addressed in its early years. Poor behavior has largely been put right. Poor attendance too, is recognized as a weakness and continues to be addressed. The school has not yet developed sufficiently robust procedures for the regular strategic review of how well it is doing academically. The key focus of consistent, systematic assessment and recording of each student's progress and analysis of aggregated data is still in development. As a result, the school does not have the objective evidence to back up its subjective view of where it is most and least effective. Neither is it well placed to set interim milestones by which to check its rate of improvement.

Staff work hard in teams to construct subject development plans. These are ambitious and targets set are aspirational. They lack assurance because they are not rooted in secure evidence of existing levels of achievement. Subject development still needs to focus on constructing a curriculum framework to help guide teachers in their planning. This is recognized and underway in some subjects such as English but is not reflected sufficiently in the current over-arching Comprehensive Education Plan.

The school has insufficient information from which to set realistic goals for improvements. Although the target set this year for 70% graduation looks reasonable, it is based more on recent information on recovery of credits by students than on a steady accumulation of reliable data over a longer period. Most targets set in the school's Comprehensive Education Plan lack full credibility because they are not convincingly based on an accurate understanding of current levels of students' achievements. For example, the target for Regent's examination success rates in English is set lower than for some other subjects, where English skills are fundamental.

Other key aspects of the school's approach to its work, such as the students' portfolio presentations, are not in the Comprehensive Education Plan. As a result, the work of the portfolio committee is isolated from main developments and practice across the school is widely inconsistent. In general, there is insufficient communication between various teams with some not knowing of the existence of others.

The lack of systematic gathering of data on students' achievements is a barrier to the regular review of those plans which the school has constructed. These cannot be easily or logically adjusted without such information. The school is clearly successful in helping students' improve socially and emotionally. It does not gather enough evidence to show these successes, and strategies such as student or parent surveys are underused.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Global Enterprise Academy (HS 541)	∅	✓	+
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		