



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Green School

An Academy for Environmental Careers

High School 454

**223 Graham Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11206**

Principal: Karali Pitzele

Dates of review: March 25 - 26, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Nick Butt

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Green School is a high school with 206 students from grade 9 through 10. The school population comprises 35% Black and 65% Hispanic students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 -2007 was 84.3%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 80% eligibility.

The school opened in September 2006 and is adding a grade each year until it has a full capacity from 9 through grade 12. Its activities are centered on developing sustainability at a personal, local and global level.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and assistant director have a clear and passionate vision for the future development of the school.
- The school caters well for the students most in need of improvement, so they grow in confidence and make good progress.
- The school has established strong links with parents and communicates well with them about how students are performing.
- The school's focus on green issues and sustainability gives particular interest and relevance to the curriculum.
- Teachers share good practice together well and take advantage of opportunities to observe lessons in one another's classrooms.
- The school's partnerships with outside organizations enrich students' learning.
- The school works hard to improve attendance, comparing its performance with that of similar schools.
- Suspensions have fallen considerably following the implementation of the student responsibility center.
- There are positive relationships between students and teachers because of the school's climate of tolerance and respect.
- The administration gives high and effective priority to the professional development of their staff.

What the school needs to improve

- Make the data given to teachers simpler and easier to interpret for use in supporting learning, and for understanding the progress of ethnic groups.
- When setting long-term goals for students, focus more on their academic potential as well as their personal development.
- Make interim goals for student outcomes objectively measurable.
- Ensure teachers take full account of the learning needs of higher attaining students.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made some progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The Green School gives students many opportunities to learn about their environment. They confront key issues of sustainability that affect them now and the world their generation will inherit in the future. The principal and the assistant director place the school's specialism at the center of all it does. They encourage staff to be creative in designing courses that both align with State and City standards and also reflect the school's mission. An innovative assessment system holds students accountable for their learning and involves them in evaluating one another's work. The school's relaxed culture fosters positive relationships, as students appreciate being treated with respect and given responsibility. High levels of collaboration between staff mean they all know how well one another's students are doing and share good practice. Outside consultants complement the effective work the school does in promoting teachers' professional development.

There has been some progress since the last review, especially in how well the school engages with parents and promotes attendance. The key appointment of the assistant director has built capacity, and has released the principal to focus on improving instruction. The school's information management systems are still difficult to access and hard to interpret. This makes it especially difficult to analyze the performance of different ethnic groups. Students now have interim goals to improve their performance, but these are not always measurable. The inquiry team has made a satisfactory start in considering the progress of underperforming ninth graders in writing and how they can be supported in organizing their essays. One-on-one conferences and writing workshops are helping these students to develop the skills they need to improve.

The school has created a successful student responsibility center, where students can go for time out if they are unable to meet classroom expectations of their conduct. This helps students to grow in maturity and holds them accountable for their actions. They must negotiate a planned return to class with the teacher and this allows them to reflect in a measured way upon their attitudes and behavior. As a result of this initiative, suspensions have fallen dramatically.

Students most in need of improvement achieve well because of the good targeted support they receive. Teachers do not always set work that fully challenges higher achieving students, so that they find it too easy and do not make the progress they could. There are good opportunities for students to set goals with their teachers at advisories. Often these focus too much on students' work habits and personal development rather than on specific targets for their academic growth.

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 the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Teachers gather a good range of evidence from regular testing and quarterly assessments, as well as qualitative data through their interactions with students. They use this information effectively to assess how well their students are doing and what would help them to improve. The school's systems for managing class and grade level data are difficult to use and are limited in the way they can be interpreted. Some of the data is incomplete, such as students' ethnicity, and this makes it hard to draw reliable conclusions. The school has introduced interactive electronic diagnostics to enhance its understanding of the needs of special education students. This work is assisting the student resource team in developing precisely matched interventions where students need practice in particular skills. Teachers devise their own rubrics to assess the projects students undertake and emphasize good work habits, collaborating together to ensure a consistency of scoring across grades and content areas. The school compares its attendance data with similar schools. As a new school, it is only beginning to accumulate test data, so can only make limited comparisons with other schools. Advisors keep folders on the students they coach and build up a detailed picture of how they are progressing in all the subjects they take.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Teachers collaborate together well in weekly meetings to discuss each student's progress based on data. They focus on those students most in need of improvement, who consequently achieve well, but also use a protocol to ensure that no one falls through the cracks. The work of the inquiry team has been useful in finding ways to engage a group of lower level ninth graders in improving their essay-writing skills. The school helps tenth graders who are at risk of not graduating to make up credits well, and keeps careful track of their progress. Advisories give students opportunities to discuss their performance and set new goals. They reflect upon how well they have met their prior goals and what they need to do next. Much of this is around their habits of work and personal development rather than fixing specific challenging academic targets for the end of year. Teachers keep both students and parents up to date about how well students are doing. The parent and student teacher conferences enable students to comment upon their progress and review their goals. A parent said, "His weaknesses became his strong points."

An August planning institute, involving all staff, sets whole school goals for the coming year, which are shared by everybody. This year the focus has been on infusing the school's green theme more strongly into the curriculum. The school makes clear its expectations to students and their parents with an emphasis on self-discipline and taking personal responsibility for their actions. "Open houses" give parents opportunities to find out more about the school and share information about their children. They receive a

good level of information about the curriculum, and rubrics, such as that for habits of work, are sent home for them to consult.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The school strikes a careful balance between teaching the core skills students require aligned to State and City tests, and creating a broad and engaging curriculum linked to its environmental specialism. In its first year of operation, the school realized that there was not enough preparation for the Regents and has worked hard this year to ensure students are well-equipped for the tests. Often the curriculum successfully combines both requirements, so that core skills are taught through a green theme. Teachers have considerable flexibility in designing courses, but the key elements remain constant. Students prepare portfolios of work and give exhibitions at the end of units, where they make presentations and are assessed by teachers and their peers. The result is a rich and creative curriculum, which includes film-making for ninth graders.

Teachers make lessons interesting for students and often involve them in practical activities, which hold their interest. During “Green Week” ninth graders designed T-shirts to reflect the theme “waste and pollution.” The school rightly gives much attention to students in its bottom third, but has come to realize that it also needs to challenge its higher achieving students more, some of whom said they found the work too easy. An enrichment research group has been formed in the ninth grade to help tackle this. The school holds teachers accountable for their students’ progress and compares passing rates.

There are very positive relationships between students and teachers, arising from the way in which adults allow students freedoms in return for maturity and responsibility. One student said, “This is our second home, the teachers are there for you.” The school’s small size means that all students are known as individuals. The success of the student responsibility center has helped to build contact between staff and students, especially through the conversations that are necessary to allow a student to return to class. The school has put a series of good procedures in place to promote attendance and monitors it closely, rewarding students with a perfect record.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The principal uses data and observations to form a clear view of what the strengths and needs for teaching are. Data from the student responsibility center gives insight into how teachers manage their classrooms, especially as students can self-elect some time out if they are finding it difficult to cope. Teachers receive high quality professional development tailored to their individual goals. This comes both from within the school’s own resources and from outside consultants, such as the National Association for

Excellent Teaching coach. Teachers also support one another well by sharing ideas and visiting one another's lessons. A program of inter-visitations has enabled them to watch their students or subject being taught by somebody else to gain insight into different approaches. The school is adopting the Californian Professional Teaching standards to give focus to its observations and to guide discussion. New teachers, in particular, benefit from this approach and from their own mentors.

The director of student support and counseling services has designed a program to develop students' personal and social growth that is taught through advisories weekly. This enables students to discuss issues of concern to them and to reflect on their experiences at school and outside. Student voice is heard through three branches of student government and students often support one another through group work. A student commented, "The school gives you the responsibilities you're going to have to use in the future." The school runs smoothly because it has clear policies and procedures in place. There are some variations in the way these are implemented however, such as in how often teachers send students to the student responsibility center. The school's lead partner, the Brooklyn Center for the Urban Environment, supplies a full time project director to assist with curriculum and professional development. Students benefit from the school's partnership with many other organizations, including Beacon for extended day activities, 'Ethno-danceology Creative' for dance, and the Cloud Institute for Sustainability Education, supporting its environmental focus.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Teachers keep a good track of how well students are progressing through the year. They focus especially on lower level students who are at risk of underachieving, with eight separate reviews. This enables them to build up a clear picture of where support is needed and to evaluate its effectiveness over time. They involve students well in setting interim goals, but these are not always objectively measurable and tend to focus on personal development and habits of work. The principal monitors the impact of professional development in classrooms, especially in teaching key skills through a project-based curriculum. Leaders follow up teachers' specific goals for professional development and make changes where necessary to move instruction forward. Leaders and teachers respond promptly to data and adjust plans and programs to help students to succeed. A group of students were given additional support in making presentations to help them pass the exhibition stage of their assessments. Others were given more opportunity to choose projects that interested them to increase their levels of engagement. It was decided to separate out English language arts and American history when it became clear combined humanities could not keep pace with the content requirements of the Regents. Strategic reviews of the curriculum in August, and again in January, help teachers to focus on what works and to adjust their planning accordingly. It was through these meetings that the school decided it needed to place greater emphasis on challenging its higher achieving students. The principal and assistant directors' commitment to the school's core focus on sustainability is a vision that unites the staff, students and parents as a reflective and forward-thinking learning community.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: THE GREEN SCHOOL	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
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Quality Score			X		
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Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?			X		
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?			X		
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?			X		
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?		X			
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?			X		
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?			X		
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?		X			
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X		

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?			X		
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?			X		
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?			X		
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X		

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?			X		
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?			X		
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?		X			
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?			X		
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X		

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.					
To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?			X		
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?				X	
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?			X		
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?			X		
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?			X		
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X		

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.					
To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?			X		
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?			X		
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?			X		
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X		

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped