

Quality Review Report

2008-2009

**The Green School: An Academy for Environmental
Careers**

**High School 454
223 Graham Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11206**

Principal: Karali Pitzele

**Dates of review: May 4 - 5, 2009
Lead Reviewer: Lawrence Block**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Green School is a high school with 281 students in grades 9 through 11. The school population comprises 48% Black, 49% Hispanic, 1% White, 1% American Indian, and 1% Asian. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007-2008 was 79.4%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 70% eligibility. The school has been open for three years.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

School leaders have created a caring, collaborative environment that has effective structures for communication and reflection. Elements of distributive leadership are evident on all levels of the school, from common planning meetings to student-led conferences. Staff and students enthusiastically embrace the prominently featured Culminating Unit Projects, which showcase the school's project-based approach to engaging students in the process of their development and serve as a vehicle for students and teachers to interact in meaningful ways about student growth. However, the school does not sufficiently personalize curricular goals for units of study because it does not ensure that they are based on assessments of student progress toward content standards. Parents and students report that there is good communication and support from the school, but students are often unable to explain their learning goals with sufficient specificity and clarity.

The school collects a wide variety of data and uses the inquiry team effectively to support teachers in the use of data in the classroom. While there is evidence of tracking of student progress class by class, the school has not yet developed a centralized system to collect the data across the school, or identify interim checkpoints by which to regularly assess progress towards longer term goals. Consequently there is insufficient data to enable leaders to monitor trends in student progress in order to refine instructional practices and to revise school planning as necessary. In general, teachers are enthusiastic and committed to the personal and academic development of their students. However, the school does not use data systematically to assess the impact of teachers' different instructional strategies on student progress and, as a result, its professional development plan is not closely enough linked to specific areas of need such as differentiation and personalized learning.

The principal communicates a strong vision that encompasses the school's theme of sustainability. This vision comes to life in the school-wide focus on developing habits of work that has resulted in a good classroom environment and supportive relationships that cultivate student responsibility. Interviews with students indicate that they have internalized many of these habits.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's vision of preparing students for life in a sustainable society is well understood by the school community and drives the development of curriculum and instruction.
- The school makes effective use of summative data to track individual student performance and, as a result, academic support is well focused on need.
- Supportive relationships among teachers, students, parents and administration have resulted in a caring community and a calm and purposeful classroom learning environment.
- Teachers, coaches and administrators are working together enthusiastically and creatively to design curricula which are interconnected and therefore engage students in active learning.
- The inquiry team model effective curricular and instructional strategies to increase student learning and this is having a positive impact on classroom practice.
- Students collaborate to create their own developmental goals and plans for improvement with the result that they are well motivated and work hard.

What the school needs to improve

- Collect data centrally and analyze and interpret it systematically in all core subjects to track trends in student progress school-wide.
- Establish challenging learning goals in core subjects, with suitable timeframes and measurable interim checkpoints which enable staff to monitor outcomes rigorously and revise plans to meet student needs.
- Use subject-level data to inform teachers' planning and differentiate instructional strategies to meet the needs of students at all levels.
- Set explicit, data-led and differentiated professional development goals with teachers that are monitored regularly throughout the school year.

Part 3: Main Findings

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school has a wide range of achievement data at individual, class and subgroup level which it uses to track student performance. Inquiry team members work with the staff on the use of data to inform instruction and planning, modeling good use of data to identify trends in scholarship. Teachers have begun to analyze the results of diagnostic assessments in English and math to identify subgroups in class, such as students in the lowest third, in order to implement strategies to meet the needs of these students. At the classroom level, teachers and students maintain and use results from formative assessments to track progress. While school administrators and coaches regularly and collaboratively review classroom-level work with teachers, the school does not systemically collect and analyze formative assessment data to identify school-wide trends in student progress.

Quarterly reviews serve as well-regarded vehicles for students to share their outcomes with parents in collaborative discussions of the students' academic performance. Information on daily student attendance is gathered and used to quickly contact homes to communicate attendance infractions. The school further uses this information to identify subgroups in order to apply appropriate support measures, such as retrieving lost class time after school. Parents commend the excellent communication from the school and, as a result of these outreach measures, there have been recent and welcome gains in attendance.

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.

All constituents work together to construct the Comprehensive Educational Plan and identify overarching goals that set the direction of the school. There are suitable goals in some subjects relating to study habits and content skills that shape individualized student work through project-based assignments. Students are involved in generating developmental goals, which have check-points throughout the year. This enables students to reflect on their progress towards meeting their goals based on school-designed rubrics that identify levels of development of skills and work habits. Students share their reflections, portfolios and unit projects with teachers and parents during well-attended meetings. Parents value these meetings and the good communication from school staff that keeps them informed about their children's progress. However, there is insufficient focus on goals that relate to curricula. As a result, many students are unable to articulate specific content goals and next steps towards improving learning outcomes.

School leaders and faculty have high expectations of students' performance and expect them to complete their work and to develop appropriate habits. While they communicate these expectations to students and parents, some parents reported that the expectations are not borne out in the tasks students are given, for example because homework is too easy and takes little time to complete.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students' learning goals.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Engaging units of study have been developed in all subject areas that incorporate the school's environmental theme. Each semester, students participate in interdisciplinary projects during 'Green Week'. Although the range of options is not broad, the school offers students throughout the academic spectrum some valuable choices such as participation in enrichment activities, college-level courses and internships. School leaders are continuing to expand the selection of clubs and extracurricular activities to provide more students with opportunities to pursue their own academic and recreational interests.

Teachers use school-created backward-design curricula to plan lessons effectively. They have also developed performance-based rubrics aligned to the curriculum and skills maps to aid differentiation and assessment to accelerate student learning. There are good examples of engaging activities and student groupings that are providing suitable and challenging work that meets a range of student needs, but practice is inconsistent and, as a result, some lessons do not challenge students sufficiently or engage their interest.

Administrators use resources imaginatively to reflect their collaborative approach to meeting goals. Examples of this include scheduling for common planning in all subject areas, funding coaches and summer institutes for professional development and the use of creative scheduling for student programs. These structures support the collegial spirit among staff. The school has developed a culture where students and adults are mutually respectful and students unhesitatingly express their appreciation saying, "The teachers are really there for you".

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

This year, the school introduced the Santa Cruz Teaching Standards and segments of book study as a professional development strategy to improve differentiated instruction. In addition, supervisors and coaches work with teachers to promote effective practices related to student engagement and project-based learning. Strategies include intervisitations, regular meetings with collaborative teams and supervisors, and partnerships with organizations such as the Cloud Institute and the National Association for Excellent Teachers. Overwhelmingly, teachers comment that they are benefiting from this structured range of professional development opportunities. New teachers are

suitably supported by mentors who work with coaches and supervisors in a unified approach to teacher training. However, supervisors do not use their observations of teachers' instructional practices to establish explicit and differentiated goals for each teacher and the school has not linked its evidence of student performance with the strategic development of teachers' skills to increase student passing rates.

There are good opportunities for collaboration between teachers and the administration which enable them to review student work and identify ways to improve student performance. The inquiry team share student data collected from diagnostic assessments in English and math and other sources and members are leading the development of a new generation of relevant interventions to accelerate student achievement.

The school provides students with a strong, comprehensive advisory program that focuses on the significant personal and academic growth of students. The school has carefully cultivated a broad range of beneficial partnerships which cover the spectrum academic, artistic and youth development activities and help to enhance students' experience.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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.

The emphasis on open discussion within collaborative meetings has created an active forum for the routine identification of school strengths and areas for improvement related to curriculum and instruction. Leaders are using data more consistently to set and define content-specific goals although this is not well established. However, some action planning is not robust and does not provide an adequate structure for monitoring specific developments as it lacks clear timeframes and measurable interim goals. Although there is some monitoring of instruction and student learning outcomes to form a basis for professional development strategies and curricular revisions, the overall system lacks coherence.

Nevertheless, leaders do monitor the results of Regents exam scores carefully to identify the need for extra support for students and the impact of extended-day intervention classes. They have been responsive to the outcomes, by for example, re-organizing student schedules to provide more targeted intervention for students when monitoring showed the current support was not meeting the students' needs. There are further examples of successful instructional reviews that resulted in the effective revision of practices. For instance, the work and findings of the inquiry team stimulated the math department to review current practices and revise their procedures to address closely the needs of the students.

Through collaborative meetings and written communications, the strong vision of the principal of sustainability, curriculum design and building student capacity to be self-reflective is successfully shared with the school community.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

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|--|---|----------|----------|---|
| School name: The Green School: An Academy for Environmental Careers | Δ | ➤ | ✓ | + |
| Overall QR Score | | | X | |
| Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time. | | | | |
| <i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i> | Δ | ➤ | ✓ | + |
| 1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students? | | | X | |
| 1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students? | | | X | |
| 1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data? | | | X | |
| 1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress? | | 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 student’s learning. | | | | |
| <i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i> | Δ | ➤ | ✓ | + |
| 2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals? | | X | | |
| 2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)? | | | X | |
| 2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families? | | | X | |
| 2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps? | | | X | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 2 | | | X | |

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYQ, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

| Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals. | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|---|--|---|-------------------|---|-----------------------|
| <i>To what extent do ...</i> | △ | ➤ | ✓ | + | | | |
| 3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards? | | | X | | | | |
| 3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals? | | X | | | | | |
| 3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals? | | | X | | | | |
| 3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults? | | | X | | | | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 3 | | | X | | | | |
| Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning. | | | | | | | |
| <i>To what extent do school leaders...</i> | △ | ➤ | ✓ | + | | | |
| 4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers? | | X | | | | | |
| 4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning? | | | X | | | | |
| 4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes? | | | X | | | | |
| 4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students? | | | X | | | | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 4 | | | X | | | | |
| Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning. | | | | | | | |
| <i>To what extent do...</i> | △ | ➤ | ✓ | + | | | |
| 5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year? | | X | | | | | |
| 5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year? | | | X | | | | |
| 5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies? | | | X | | | | |
| 5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth? | | | X | | | | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 5 | | | X | | | | |
| Quality Review Scoring Key | | | | | | | |
| △ | Underdeveloped | ➤ | Underdeveloped with Proficient Features | ✓ | Proficient | + | Well Developed |