

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2008-2009**

**Science, Technology and Research Early College High  
School at Erasmus**

**Middle-High School 543**

**911 Flatbush Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11226**

**Principal: Eric Blake**

**Dates of review: April 27 - 28, 2009**  
**Lead Reviewer: Rudolph Rupnarain**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Science, Technology, and Research Early College at Erasmus (STAR) is a middle-high school with 488 students from grades 6 through 12. The school population comprises 89% Black, 7% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. There are no English language learners or 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 93.7%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 63% eligibility.

The school is a member of the national early college initiative in partnership with the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, Brooklyn College of The City University of New York and Gateway Institute for Pre-College Education. Students complete most graduation requirements in two years. In grade 11, they begin a dual program of college level courses at Brooklyn College spending three days on campus and two days at school.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is well developed.**

The school has focused on and successfully addressed all the issues identified in the previous Quality Review. Parents and students alike express enthusiasm for the school's website, that continuously provides detailed information on the progress of each student in every core subject. The work and findings of the inquiry team is now shared on the website so that all staff members have secure and confidential access.

The leadership has continued to offer strategic and differentiated professional development for all staff members and has held all teachers accountable for the implementation of differentiated instruction in the classroom, although this remains a work in progress. Multiple data sources provide an array of sophisticated and integrated information that enables the school to understand the specific needs of each student as well as the needs of each subgroup. Regular conferences with teachers, counselors, and college professors help students to understand how well they are doing, but feedback to students with detailed responses and clear next steps for improvement on their work is not consistent across all classes. However, the establishing of specific interim and long-term goals for all students in every core subject with differentiated plans and timeframes for meeting them is not yet consistent.

The highly effective partnerships with Brooklyn College of The City University of New York and Gateway Institute have provided many opportunities for accelerated student performance enabling students to earn as much as sixty college credits by the end of twelfth grade. The school runs smoothly and discipline is very good. Although the school's attendance exceeds that of its peers, it is constantly seeking ways to improve attendance by increasing its outreach with the community through the hiring of an additional social worker.

The administration has effectively share high expectations with staff, parents and students. Every constituent believes that all graduating students will be attending college. The excellent communication with parents allows them to be fully engaged in their children's education. Parents are highly supportive of the work of the school and praise the respect, care and dedication their children receive from the staff.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Meticulous use of a wide range of relevant data provides leaders and faculty with an accurate, ongoing understanding of individual, group, and subject performance, which informs instruction and organizational adjustments.
- The school works closely with parents and students to encourage good attendance and academic achievement focusing on future college readiness.
- There are excellent communication systems that keep parents fully informed of school activities and their children's progress.
- The principal and staff work as a united team to create a calm, respectful and orderly environment for learning to take place.
- Teachers collaborate frequently to examine student work, plan together and visit each other's classrooms to share ideas and best practice, through a desire to improve student outcomes continuously.
- Professional development is effectively differentiated, related to teachers' individual growth plans and well founded on classroom observations and the analysis of student progress data.
- Students benefit from a rich, integrated curriculum through its partnerships with Brooklyn College and achieve high standards.

### What the school needs to improve

- Be sure that feedback to students on their work consistently gives detailed reasons why they were successful and clear next steps for improvement.
- Enhance the good practice of using multiple data sources consistently to plan differentiated instruction in all classrooms.
- Ensure that specific interim and long-term goals for all students in every core subject with differentiated plans and timeframes for meeting them are consistent.

## 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 well developed.**

The school has meticulous procedures to collect, analyze, and proactively use a wide range of data to monitor students' progress and improve their achievement in all subjects. Each student has an individualized action plan that captures the results of all test data and areas for improvement. In addition, attendance data is analyzed rigorously along with performance data to identify patterns and potential difficulties.

The cabinet members continuously monitor the progress of individuals, groups, and sub-groups of students and make strategic adjustments to organizational strategies based on their analysis of data. For example, the students attending Brooklyn College are rigorously analyzed by the school as well as by the faculty at Brooklyn College for both attendance and performance. As a result, there has been a significant improvement in attendance, lateness, and credit accumulation among this sub-group of students.

Parents receive a wealth of valuable information through the school's website, "mygradebook.com" that keeps them fully informed of their children's progress, learning goals, and provides curriculum information about the content and skills development. In addition, they receive and sign progress reports and learning goals that are sent home frequently. They also access information about school activities through monthly newsletters, the school's website, and the phone messaging service. As a result, parents embrace and support the academically rigorous programs designed to prepare all students for college. One parent remarked, "My child can finish two years of college while attending this school and this will help me save a lot of money."

School leaders and faculty conference regularly with students to develop, monitor, and revise learning goals. Students can clearly articulate their goals and their next learning steps. Attendance has remained relatively high for several years, partly because students are more engaged in the curriculum. However, the addition of another social worker has resulted in the implementation of rigorous attendance monitoring mechanisms, which have contributed to excellent academic results as well as improved 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 well developed.**

Leaders and faculty set detailed school and subject goals collaboratively as identified in the Comprehensive Educational Plan and develop strategic action plans to inform future goal setting. The leaders' monitor progress regularly towards the achievement of these

goals by reviewing marking period grades, interim progress reports, Acuity data and also through regular classroom visits.

There are highly effective systems to create student-learning goals, and to evaluate progress towards meeting those goals that students and parents fully understand. Every parent has an email account that provides ongoing access to teachers and the progress of their children in tests, quizzes, projects and homework. The data collected enables teachers to provide aptly targeted support within lessons and in after-school programs. Students record their learning goals and action plans in binders, which they are encouraged to share regularly with their parents. In addition, teachers meet with individual students weekly to review their work. However, they do not consistently provide regular feedback to students in all core subjects on what they need to do to improve their work and therefore do not always provide precise actionable learning goals. The school has recognized this need and through its curricular inquiry meetings and learning walks has begun to address this issue.

The very high expectations shared by the whole community can be credited to the strong partnership with Brooklyn College where students can earn up to sixty college credits by the time they graduate. Incoming freshman students and parents attend the orientation meeting at Brooklyn College and weekly seminars are held in the spring to immerse the students in college culture, sending a clear signal that all students are expected to complete college. Parents receive constant feedback regarding their child's progress and the sharing of goals. Students are highly engaged and motivated by their learning and this is further demonstrated by the excellent student attendance levels and good parent participation in the work of 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.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

There is a rich and integrated curriculum providing all students with the skills and knowledge to achieve high standards and to work independently. The curriculum is checked carefully to ensure it aligns with State standards in all subject areas, including technology and the arts. Classrooms are well organized into learning communities and many teachers make purposeful, strategic choices to deliver differentiated learning experiences so that students achieve their learning goals. However, not all teachers use data to differentiate instruction successfully which means that tasks and groupings do not always meet students' needs.

Struggling students are successfully supported in class by Brooklyn College tutors. The placement of these tutors is constantly evaluated to provide optimum and effective support to those students who are most in need. In addition, there is an accelerated program for ninth and tenth grade students that enables them to obtain all required high school credits at The City University of New York, Brooklyn College campus where they can earn up to sixty college credits. At present, approximately sixty percent of eleventh and twelfth grade students are currently earning college credits at Brooklyn College while the remaining students are enrolled in the Virtual Enterprise program where they create and develop business plans in partnership with Merrill Lynch.

The school's outstanding culture provides a caring and inclusive learning environment where students feel safe and well supported. All members of the school community work collaboratively in a caring and respectful environment. Many students believe their teachers really care about them and push them to do their best. One student remarked that, "the teachers are approachable and go out of their way to help us by tutoring us during their lunch periods." Parents' active support of the school's behavioral norms, that include the wearing of uniform and the enforcement of a well defined discipline code, contribute to a highly effective learning environment.

**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 well developed.**

The school benefits from a very loyal and highly motivated staff resulting in few vacancies, if any, at the start of each academic year. The school's partnership with Brooklyn College provides a good source for teacher training and recruitment, and many opportunities for student tutoring. Individual teacher development plans, supported by data and observation, empower teachers to deliver effective and differentiated instruction. However, this practice is not consistent across all core subjects. The principal provides direct professional development to his cabinet by using a mentor text, "The Skillful Teacher" which enables them to observe effectively and provide strategies to improve teaching and learning. The mentoring of new teachers, supported by the assignment of a buddy, emphasizes the need to provide rigorous, standards-based instruction.

Leaders act as exemplary role models through the constant modeling of effective pedagogical practices. Following formal observations, school leaders consistently refer to each teacher's detailed professional development plan when providing feedback to teachers and setting goals for their progress. Teachers state that the observation process is always focused on improving student learning and that the feedback is timely, specific and extremely useful. Observations focus suitably on areas relating to the four school goals as well as identifying specific strengths. The school's establishment and encouragement of a variety of professional collaborations have effectively embedded a collaborative inquiry approach beyond the two formally established inquiry teams. Consequently, a risk-free environment enables teachers to share the work of the inquiry teams and best practices across the entire school.

The school has developed an outstanding range of very useful partnerships with Brooklyn College, Gateway, and Woodrow Wilson. These partnerships benefit the students considerably by offering related courses and advanced programs, providing advice and support about future career options and offering internships to help students develop their skills within a work-related environment. Gateway provides a very successful internship for students interested in health related careers to work at Bellevue Hospital Medical Center during the summer to learn about the job responsibilities and educational requirements of the health professions. In addition, the principal identified that there was a gap in family engagement and has hired a social worker to assist in family outreach as well as providing additional social and emotional services to the school community. This move has resulted in increase parent involvement.

**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 well developed.**

The principal and cabinet have a clear vision for the school's development, which is outlined in the three-year plan developed by the school leadership team. They have worked well together to agree necessary strategies to effect change and to create clear timeframes to accomplish them. However, interim checkpoints and goals against which progress can be measured, readjustments made and successfully evaluated are not consistent in all core subjects. The school has successfully addressed areas identified through the last Quality Review and improvements they have identified as necessary through continuous monitoring and data evaluation.

School leaders effectively utilize all external reports and specifically the Atlas Rubicon Curriculum Mapping system that provides side-by-side comparisons of units to detect level of alignment with previously established subject area benchmarks. The school's comprehensive assessment program that includes the Acuity interim assessments Brooklyn College reports, Measurement of Assessment Progress and a variety of anecdotal information is used to monitor student progress and inform professional development needs. Frequent learning walks allow staff to self-reflect on their instructional approaches and to make adjustments when indicated by the data and anecdotal evidence.

All members of the school community share and support the school's vision of excellence and college readiness. As one student said, "The school expects that all of us attending here will continue on to college." The whole school contributed to the development of a well-documented self-evaluation in preparation for the Quality Review. More importantly, the self-evaluation provided the school with the opportunity for self-reflection on their accomplishments and areas for improvement. The school expects to continue its leadership role as an institution that will challenge all of its students to achieve their best in an accelerated learning environment.

## School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

<b>School name: Science, Technology and Research Early College HS</b>	△	▷	✓	+
<b>Overall QR Score</b>				<b>X</b>
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
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?				<b>X</b>
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?				<b>X</b>
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?				<b>X</b>
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?				<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				<b>X</b>
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?			<b>X</b>	
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?				<b>X</b>
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?				<b>X</b>
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?				<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>				<b>X</b>

### 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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				<b>X</b>

**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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>				<b>X</b>

**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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>				<b>X</b>

<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
△	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>	✓	<b>Proficient</b>	+	<b>Well Developed</b>