

# **Quality Review Report 2008-2009**

**GLOBE School for Environmental Research**

**Middle School 272  
3710 Barnes Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10467**

**Principal: Ms Barbara Hartnett**

**Dates of review: November 19 – 20, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Mick Megee**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

GLOBE School for Environmental Research is a middle school with 525 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 65% Black, 30% Hispanic, 1% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 60% of the students enrolled and girls account for 40%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 92.3%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 80% eligibility.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is proficient.**

The administration, through its promotion of the data committee and the inquiry teams, has shown its resourcefulness and willingness to innovate in bringing in new ways of gathering and utilizing data. However, the school has yet to extend its effective use of data in English language arts, math and social studies to all core subjects. The school makes good use of its partnerships to ensure that teachers receive a good range of professional development activities and this has resulted in a culture among teachers which is open, reflective and self-critical. There is now a real air of enthusiasm among teachers about using data to raise student achievement.

The majority of teachers skillfully incorporate their knowledge of students' prior achievements into their planning and differentiate their lessons so that every student is challenged at the right level. However, not all staff are entirely proficient in this area. In recognition of this, the school is allocating further resources in order to bring everyone up to the level of the best practice. Where teachers are not effective in providing the right level of challenge, students, particularly higher achievers, are easily distracted. Parents, students and staff say that they find the consequent misbehavior concerning and disruptive to the learning of all the students in the class.

Within English language arts, math and social studies, staff make good use of goals and goal setting in order to ratchet up achievement further. There are good systems in place within these subjects to monitor and evaluate students' progress towards achieving individual and group goals. The school plans to extend data collection and goal setting across other subjects in due course.

There are tangible improvements in the school's communication with parents. The school has provided retreats and family days so that staff can gather information about what needs to be improved, and to receive and generate ideas about how this can be achieved. Parents appreciate the way the school has listened to them and feel that a real partnership is beginning to emerge. However, the school does not yet give parents sufficient information about their children's learning goals, which would allow them to support their children's personal and academic development further. The principal has shown good vision and leadership during this period, and the school community supports her well in her drive for improvement.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- There are good systems in place to gather, utilize and monitor data about students' progress in English language arts, math and social studies.
- The school uses its external partnerships well to provide a varied and exciting curriculum, which students enjoy.
- School leaders get the best out of their teachers by accurately assessing their performance, ensuring they know how best to improve and by providing them with good opportunities to develop their skills.
- The principal accurately identifies where improvements are required in order to maximize student progress and has gained the commitment of staff to ensure that necessary changes take place.
- The administration has established a reflective and collaborative culture among the staff so that they learn from each other and continually strive to improve student outcomes.
- The data committee and the inquiry teams do well in demonstrating to the staff how rigorous data management leads to improvement in performance.

### What the school needs to improve

- Extend the sophisticated use of data in English language arts, math and social studies to all other core subjects.
- Improve the behavior of students, particularly by ensuring that there is sufficient pace and challenge in every lesson to engage them fully.
- Make more effective use of data in planning every lesson so that instruction and learning more accurately meets the needs of all the students, particularly those who are higher achievers.
- Improve written feedback on student's work and inform parents of their children's learning goals so that they can support them in their work and maximize progress.

## 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 worked hard over the last year in order to improve and refine systems for generating and analyzing information about student performance and progress in English language arts, math and social studies. The school's data committee gives the administration and faculty a clear picture of the performance and progress of individual students as well as the various subgroups in the school, such as Black boys, English language learners and special education students. It is beginning to collect and utilize data in other subjects, such as science, but this work is still at a relatively early stage of development.

In the classrooms, teachers keep records of how well students are doing from day to day, so that they can use this information when planning instruction. The administration is not afraid to provide inventive means to assist the collection of data. For example, teachers make good use of the "Qwizdom" voting technology, which the students greatly enjoy. The administration utilizes test and assessment results well, and often innovatively, to make decisions about class organization and the support programs. An example of the school's resourceful response to data analysis is the reorganization of the whole school into learning communities known as "villages". This arrangement promotes flexibility within the academic program by allowing an easy transfer of students between classes in response to their changing learning needs. The data committee works diligently in order to demonstrate the strength of impact such responses have on improving students' social and academic performance.

The work carried out by the inquiry teams is paving the way by demonstrating how the effective collection of data and its utilization in instruction can have a very positive impact upon students' progress, for example with those girls who make relatively slower progress in math. The school has been equally successful in improving attendance. The school has accurately identified those students who were persistently absent, and by taking effective remedial action has improved attendance substantially. The teachers keep the students informed about their performance and next steps, through verbal feedback in lessons and regular student conferences. However, teachers do not always give enough written guidance on how to improve when they are assessing students' work. Parents regularly and frequently receive information from the school about their children's academic and personal progress and appreciate the steps that the principal is taking to improve communication further, for example through family days. At present parents receive detailed information in English language arts, math, social studies and science. However, the school misses an opportunity for parents to help their children further, because it passes relatively little information to families about students' individual goals.

**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.**

The whole staff collaborates well in generating school-wide goals, although these do not yet extend to all core subjects. The goals are incorporated into the Comprehensive Educational Plan, which provides the school community with a useful roadmap for the future. The school makes effective use of its analysis of data in order to set individual benchmarks and final goals for students in English language arts, math, social studies and science. Students know that their individual goals are important, and strive towards reaching them quickly. They look forward to their individual conferences where these goals are reviewed and reset if necessary. The administration sets interim and final goals for the different subgroups in English language arts, math and social studies. Each semester, the data committee reviews and, where necessary, resets goals in these subjects. In this way, reportable goals drive instruction to good effect. There is emerging work in setting subgroup goals in science, but as yet the school does not set benchmarks goals for individuals or subgroups in the other core subjects.

There is an improving dialogue with families about the progress that students make. Last year, the administration responded robustly to data showing that parents felt that communication with the school was not as good as it could be. The school organized two well-received retreats, which enabled them to air problems and find solutions. Parents report that the retreats marked a turning point in improved relationships with the school. Parents now feel that the school, under the leadership of the current principal, sets high expectations and works very hard to achieve the best for the children. Teachers also convey high expectations in a concrete way through the celebration of the students’ high-quality work and paintings in classrooms and hallways. Teachers send home monthly written reports on progress, and are frequently in touch with families by phone, often to give good news about their children’s work.

**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.**

The school provides its students with a good range of subjects and activities, which are enhanced by its close partnerships with various external institutions. The school has developed strong links with the YMCA, which provides specialist training for the staff in how to assess students’ social development, and how to provide for their needs. The partnership with the New York Botanical Garden (NYBG) offers the students opportunities for visiting and participating in exciting activities that support the school’s vision well. The NYBG provides internships to eighth graders, and has established a weather station on the grounds of the school. Queens College Education and Science Faculty provides staff with professional development opportunities to expand and hone their skills and knowledge.

The school provides students with good opportunities for academic improvement through its after-school program. For example, the students are able to attend a Regents program, test preparation for specialized high schools and a very popular accelerated math program. There is a morning remediation program, a holiday academy and a Saturday academy.

School leaders are quick to make strategic organizational changes when the data committee's analysis of data indicates underachievement by any subgroup. For instance, in order to improve the performance of students requiring a more hands-on approach to learning the administration has incorporated robotics into the schedule. In order to improve attendance, the administration made the start time for school later and this reduced absence by 10%. The four inquiry teams focus very well on closing the achievement gap for identified subgroups in the school. One team is continuing its successful work in improving the performance of a group of girls in math. Another team is concentrating on improving literacy with a group of African-American boys, and a third team is focusing on the underachievement of a group of special education students in English language arts and math.

The staff are very supportive of one another and show respect for the students in the way they address them and attend to their questions and difficulties. In most lessons, students reciprocate this respect and make good progress with their work. However, students, staff and parents agree that occasionally there is still a problem with the misbehavior of a significant minority of students, which interrupts the learning of the majority. This happens when lesson activities are uninspiring, there is lack of pace or the teacher does not match tasks accurately enough to the achievement levels of the students. All the teachers are working hard to develop their skills in differentiating instruction to match the needs of the students, drawing on the good practice of the more skillful teachers and the work of the inquiry teams. Nevertheless, in some classes teachers are not yet providing sufficiently challenging work for all the students, especially the higher achievers. The school recognizes that some teachers are better at differentiation than others and is providing additional professional development through the Renzulli Institute.

**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**

The school has not yet extended its capacity building across all core subject areas, but has made a good start in what it has achieved in English language arts, math and social studies. Teachers receive good support from the literacy and math coaches in determining goals based on available data sets. Teachers welcome the support they receive from the administration following the regular formal and informal observation of their classroom practice. Individual teachers receive clear written guidance as to what aspects of their performance are going well, and those which require further development. The school provides professional development wherever there is a need, and makes good use of the partner institutions in this respect. The administration closely monitors the impact of professional development on the quality of teaching and learning as well as on student outcomes. New teachers receive additional assessment and guidance, which they find very helpful and which often brings about rapid improvement in their instructional skills and understanding.

Teachers benefit from the numerous opportunities provided to visit each other's lessons and to share good practice. This has led to a culture of openness, reflection and collaboration between staff. Teachers report this as being a key element in their enjoyment of working at the school and this is reflected in the low staff absence and a rapid improvement in their professional practice. The administration does a good job in encouraging teachers to participate in the inquiry teams and to share in the leadership of the three villages. Teachers feel these activities confer high professional status and are eager to support them.

The school provides a good range of support services that allows students to stay on track and to make as much progress as possible. These services are enhanced by the village structure, which gives students an added feeling of security and belonging. Parents are very pleased with the support given to those students who have medical needs, such as those with asthma or epilepsy. Students who enter the school with literacy scores which are below the proficient level are assisted effectively by programs such as READ180.

**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 administration has put in place an effective system for monitoring goals at regular intervals throughout the year, although this has not yet been extended across all core subjects. It has established a system of regular benchmarking in English language arts, math, science and social studies, by which it can gauge the success of its progress towards achieving its goals in those areas. The village leaders meet regularly with their staff teams to keep a check on individual, class and village performance. Through these means, the administration has a raised awareness of when and where they need to take action. Teachers are gaining the skills they require to track student progress and performance throughout the year, and to recognize any early warnings of underachievement. They are becoming increasingly flexible in adapting their instruction to meet the new challenges.

The principal is adept at providing pragmatic solutions when results are not quite as expected. For example, in response to lower than expected literacy scores, she bought in class sets of novels with accompanying audio versions, which revitalized the students' enthusiasm and is bringing progress back on track.

The principal makes very clear the standards she expects of everybody, and of her plans for future improvement. She recognizes that there is still some way to go to achieve what is required, for example in providing all students with the right level of challenge in their work, and in ensuring that all core subjects are rich in data. She rightly regards the professional development of her staff, especially in generating and responding to new data as it emerges, as the keystone in maximizing student progress. In this way, she has gained the commitment and support of students, staff and parents who all speak very well of her vigorous, down-to-earth leadership.

## School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

<b>School name: The Globe School for Environmental Research</b>	Δ	➤	✓	+
<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>	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?			<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>	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?			<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, DY0, 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.**

To what extent do ...	Δ	➤	✓	+
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>				
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.**

To what extent do school leaders...	Δ	➤	✓	+
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>				
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.**

To what extent do ...	Δ	➤	✓	+
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>				
X				

**Quality Review Scoring Key**

Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed
---	----------------	---	---	---	------------	---	----------------