

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2008-2009**

**The Marble Hill School**  
**Elementary School 310**  
**260 West Kingsbridge Road**  
**Bronx**  
**NY 10463**

**Principal: Elizabeth Cardona**

**Dates of review: February 26 - 27, 2009**

**Lead Reviewer: Sara Carvajal**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Marble Hill School is an elementary school with 711 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 13% Black, 82% Hispanic, 3% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 36% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 92.8%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 79% eligibility.

### Overall Evaluation

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

The Marble Hill School is a tightly run site, led by a team of energetic, passionate administrators who disseminate a unified vision for equity in student achievement. Parents attribute the successes of their “college-bound children” to the school’s strong leadership and committed teachers. Students view the school as a great place to learn because of its safe environment, growing use of technology during classroom instruction and the sense of trust that invites children to confide in adults at the site.

The spirit of collaboration is the driving force that underpins the wide range of focused, data-driven planning and communication between the school and families. As a result, various learning groups continue to sprout throughout the academies. Similarly, parent leaders have become increasingly involved in molding the school’s high expectations, and then, voluntarily serving as the ambassadors that inform the extended local community of school-wide initiatives. Teachers greatly appreciate the support from assistant principals who set interim professional development goals with them at the onset of the year and at regular intervals throughout the academic year.

Some instruction, particularly in reading, is implemented in a differentiated manner assisted by academic intervention teachers and consultants to support classroom teachers in addressing the needs of struggling students via small-group, teacher-directed lessons; but the school does not yet demonstrate teachers’ effective use of data in the planning of differentiated lessons that enrich higher achieving students to maximize their achievements.

School leadership has developed a great momentum for continued improvement, and all school constituents have an opportunity to collaboratively build upon the current year’s successes. At present, the school does not dig deeply enough in its use of rubrics as a valuable data source that supports the development and monitoring of individualized interim student goals. Additionally, students are not consistently involved in setting their own goals and reflecting on their progress at clearly defined checkpoints throughout the year. This reduces their ability to express confident ownership and articulation of their specific targets. Classroom climates present insufficient opportunity for independent learning due to an absence of visual references to help broaden the core curriculum and to assist subgroups of special education students and English language learners in particular.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal and staff share a clear vision for continued school improvement that is focused on closing the achievement gap between subgroups and the general population of students.
- The principal and staff effectively involve parents in school-wide planning so that high expectations are continually communicated to the entire school community.
- The leadership team optimizes the use of multiple data sources to collaboratively set interim professional development goals with teachers and then monitor improved teacher practice throughout the school year.
- School leaders have made strategic decisions for organization and instruction to enhance the school culture so that deepened student and teacher learning can occur.
- The principal has solidly implemented the use of a wide range of assessments that support teachers in monitoring student growth in English language arts, math and science.
- School leaders have strategically expanded their work with action research, empowering teacher members to proactively share the inquiry team findings and replicate successful instructional strategies in all classrooms.

### What the school needs to improve

- Expand the consistent use of rubrics across curriculum areas to broaden the support to students when setting and monitoring specific, individualized interim learning goals.
- Deepen teacher use of data when planning for effective differentiation of instruction that enriches the learning of higher achieving students and minimizes achievement slippage.
- Increase student involvement in individualized goal-setting and on-going progress reflection at interim checkpoints throughout the year to promote confident ownership and articulation of such goals across curriculum areas.
- Maximize the classroom climate for nurturing academic independence that supports increased content knowledge and vocabulary particularly for English language learners and special education students.

## 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 principal's data-driven vision ripples throughout the school site. Administrators across academies engage teachers in ongoing, rigorous discussions about the importance of gathering data. Additionally, school leaders support teachers in analyzing multi-tiered data as it impacts on significant school improvement. In particular, the leadership team effectively utilizes data in English language arts, math and science to identify the school's trends and areas of concern when addressing faculty and parents about school-wide organizational and instructional decision-making. All stakeholders are committed to the current focus of closing the achievement gap that exists between the high percentage of English language learners and the general student population. Similarly, the leadership team is actively enlisting resources to address the dips and plateaus that the subgroup of special needs students has demonstrated in English language arts and math State tests during recent years.

In order to monitor student growth in English language arts, math and science at interim checkpoints throughout the school year, the principal has expanded on the City-mandated formative assessment model by scheduling additional effective "in-house test simulations" for students in the testing grades. The results of these tests are efficiently and consistently organized for classroom teachers by literacy, math and science specialists who then diligently guide the teachers in understanding and owning the data so that they can properly employ the figures when setting student learning goals and monitoring growth in achieving those goals.

To complement the periodic distribution of formal report cards, the leadership and faculty have collaborated to increase the communication of formative student assessment data between the school and families. The principal has empowered teachers to systematize grade-specific interim progress reports which are distributed three times throughout the year. Parents praise the balance of formal report cards and interim reports as a string of opportunities by which to celebrate their children's progress, and at times, as a way to decide if extended-day instruction or Saturday school support is necessary.

**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.**

Each spring, an enthusiastic parent sampling meets with school leaders at an annual mini-retreat in order to analyze multiple data sources in preparation for generating the goals of the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan. Thereafter, the team meets

regularly to develop school-wide goals and review assorted formative data with the principal and make revisions to them as needed. Consequently, the principal informs the school community of school-wide decision-making through informative monthly newsletters and periodic educational update brochures. Additionally, the parent leaders take on the task of diligently communicating by word of mouth the school-wide initiatives with the extended community to ensure that everyone is informed of the school's high expectations.

On a grade-specific level, the weekly "grade study" session has evolved into the primary vehicle for conducting data-driven conversations that lead to grade-wide goal-setting and planning for instruction. As a result, teams of teachers have deepened their practice of using specific formative data to group students for focused guided reading teaching and differentiated math activities. Additionally, the "grade study" meetings have afforded classroom teachers an invaluable structure during which they can collaboratively discuss best practices, plan units of study, develop performance tasks, generate rubrics and determine calendars.

Conversations with students reveal that they are actively involved in reading and writing conferences that offer clearly defined next steps for future learning. Similarly, students engage in drafting reflections that manifest their understanding of specific content knowledge acquired during project-based learning. However, the school does not demonstrate that students are actively involved in individualized, data-driven goal-setting and self-monitoring at interim checkpoints that nurture confident ownership and articulation of such goals for math, science and social studies.

**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.**

All teachers agree that the four academies in the school, "Work, act and interact as one." To this end, the workshop model is the standard method for school-wide implementation of the highly structured City-mandated core curricula in English language arts and math, while inquiry-driven project-based units drive instruction in science and social studies. To nurture school-wide ownership of the curricula, the principal has empowered a cross-section of teachers to organize a series of grade-specific, user-friendly curriculum maps that are aligned with State standards and City scope and sequences. A "language functions" column, which is embedded within the curriculum maps, proposes a key support structure for teachers by offering prompts of focused language skills instruction for subgroups at the school.

Based on the results of informal data as well as the findings of the core inquiry team, school leaders have made strategic instructional decisions that enhance the collaborative school culture and support deepening of student learning. In particular, the principal has restructured the use of support pedagogues so that they primarily conduct push-in instruction that maximizes instructional time and aligns the supplemental service with classroom instruction. Similarly, the principal has strategically employed inquiry team members during extended day activities and the Saturday academy to support the critical thinking skills of students and increase reading comprehension. Additionally, the principal has assigned the guidance counselor to spearhead a school-wide conflict resolution program as well as a full-blown anti-bullying campaign that has resulted in a

decreased the frequency and severity of conflicts and concerns amongst students from that which previously interfered with learning.

The differentiation of instruction to provide academic intervention in English language arts and math was sporadically observed throughout the site with teacher-directed, strategy lessons for small groups as the most commonly used technique in tailored instruction. At this time, the school does not yet demonstrate teachers' effective use of data in the planning of differentiated lessons that enrich higher achieving students and minimize achievement slippage.

**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.**

Teachers greatly appreciate the way that the leadership team demonstrates respect for their ongoing professional growth by "making them want to learn" in a risk-free environment. Through the use of multiple data sources that include classroom observations and conference notes from individualized meetings, assistant principals set interim professional development goals with teachers at the onset of the year, at mid-year and at year end. Between these interim checkpoints, the leadership team employs a wide array of avenues to support teachers in achieving said goals. The principal has established a professional development conference and resource center with an instructional resource library. This center is the hub for professional learning, which includes the weekly coach-led "grade study" sessions and inquiry team meetings.

On another level, professional collaborations have directly stemmed from the expansion of data inquiry work throughout the four academies. The inclusion of more classroom teachers in the school's action research work is resulting in the increased sharing of targeted data and best practices between colleagues. Other key structures that aim to nurture the craft of teaching include: the strategic addition of a writing specialist to this year's coach team; the deliberate assignment of consultants to provide multi-tiered direct support to specific teachers; reflective in-house intervisitation to lab-site classrooms and focused workshops before and after the regular school day.

Beyond the academic realm, teachers concur that recent organizational decisions have improved the culture of the school by providing much-needed direct services to students and their families. Local community-based organizations mold the extended day programming, which includes arts and sports clubs, and offer most students recreational outlets for social and emotional growth.

The school has made significant strides in providing meaningful support to staff and students. However, the school does not yet demonstrate how it has facilitated the essential teacher practice of using the classroom as a means of nurturing academic independence. In particular, too often classrooms exhibit a focus on reading and math and are void of visual aids and reference charts that could support students in social studies and science as well as English language learners and special needs subgroups.

**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 principal and staff share a clear vision for continued school improvement that is focused on supporting the English language learners and special education students in order to close the historic achievement gap at the school. This unified vision is articulated and continuously revisited during the "grade studies", inquiry team meetings, school leadership team planning sessions and monthly parent teacher association meetings.

Coaches, content area specialists and inquiry team members consistently assess and monitor student progress in English language arts, math and science for the testing grades. Similarly, these teacher leaders model and guide rubric development, data gathering and analysis, and goal-setting for small clusters of students so that teachers may learn to employ these essential practices during their own instructional planning.

The investments in teacher development and student progress are documented through systematic monthly coach logs and interim assessment data records. The leadership team closely scrutinizes such records in order to identify where further work is required. However, the school does not yet consistently utilize rubrics as a valuable data source across curriculum areas that broadens the support to students when setting and monitoring specific, individualized short-term goals throughout the year. As such, students are not always informed of their next steps for future growth.

## School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

<b>School name: The Marble Hill School</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 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.

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