

# Quality Review Report 2009-2010

**Landmark High School**

**M419**

**351 West 18 Street  
Manhattan NY 10011**

**Principal:  
Trevor Naidoo**

**Dates of review: June 3 - 4, 2010**

**Lead Reviewer:  
Leslie M. Chislett**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Landmark is a high school with 429 students from ninth through twelfth grade. The school population comprises 23% Black, 75% Hispanic, 2% White, and 0.9% Asian students. The student body includes 14% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 56%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 78.1%.

### Overall Evaluation

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

Landmark offers a small, nurturing learning environment where students are given “choice and voice” and are uniquely challenged to reach their potential while being exceptionally prepared for college and careers. Landmark’s staff creates a dynamic, rigorous curriculum designed around student investigations of compelling problems and purposeful projects. An inquiry-based instructional model emphasizes higher order skills and choices for how student will refine their understanding and present their accomplishments. This coherent approach to curriculum and instruction is complimented by Performance Based Assessments that require students demonstrate learning through development of five culminating portfolios defended yearly before an evaluation committee in lieu of sitting for NYS Regents exams.

The school’s strong advisory program is foundational to the safe and inclusive culture that is sustained by adult-student relationships and contributes to academic success. Students describe their journey from ninth and tenth grade Junior Institute to eleventh and twelfth grade Senior Institute as “transforming,” and express confidence that Landmark equips them to succeed after high school. Parents express appreciation for positive on-going communication and the range of experiences made possible for their children through New York City explorations and community partnerships.

The principal and leadership team have effectively handled challenges related to the Landmark’s recent relocation to a campus shared with other schools ensuring efficient organization of limited space and resources to support the school’s instructional goals.

The teachers are highly professional, self-motivated learners who accept leadership, and collaborate to refine curriculum and improve their practice to meet student needs. However, teachers are not yet systematically analyzing data to formulate hypotheses about needs subgroup needs, generating strategies and monitoring progress in light of instructional adjustments. This is prerequisite to setting differentiated and measurable student learning goals, which is also not currently part of teacher team work.

School leadership recognizes the importance of improving attendance and accelerating the progress of all students towards graduation. As a result thoughtfully designed data-informed goals, action plans and structures to monitor these goals and plans are in place. Work that lies ahead for the school involves increasing sophistication of data analysis to identify student needs and trends in the classroom. Evaluation of procedures to continuously refine student assessment methods and teacher team use of data to inform classroom level changes need to be added to the school’s evaluation system in order to insure academic gains for all students.

## Part 2: Overview

## What the school does well

- School leaders and faculty intentionally design rich standards-based curriculum around relevant, rigorous investigations while emphasizing intellectual habits that engage and challenge students.
  - Curriculum maps and unit plans are collaboratively developed to articulate essential questions that frame compelling investigations of content and include multi-faceted projects or performance-based assessment tasks. For example, in Global Studies students explore the question, “What can we learn by using historical themes?” and eventually prepare a group presentation that supplies evidence for a historical pattern in context. “*How we can use linear relationships to model, explain and predict geometric and algebraic patterns in the real world?*” guides the investigation of tooth pick trains or line designs in 9<sup>th</sup> grade math. This type of planning results in a challenging and experiential program of study across disciplines and grades that engage all students.
  - Purposeful decisions are made to address and embed what the school calls *Habits of Mind, Habits of Work*. Skills such as identifying connections, examining variances, conjectures and suppositions, formulating rules and alternatives, and supporting positions with evidence are targeted across all subject areas and grades. . These higher-order thinking and learning processes are prioritized in classroom walls charts, instructional plans and routines, student learning experiences and work products. For example, supporting a position from primary sources is built into a lesson’s aim and posted on the chalk board in a history class.
- Schools leaders masterfully locate and align school resources and make necessary organizational decisions that sustain the school’s commitment to its instructional model and accomplish student learning goals(1.3)
  - The principal’s astute budgeting practices and ability to leverage grants and community partnerships have brought technology into classrooms, and made *New York Experience* field trips and numerous enriching programs such as theater and sailing excursions possible.
  - Faculty assignments and student scheduling are thoughtfully arranged to provide ample time in the morning for in-depth learning in core subject areas while enrichment courses, Academic Intervention Services and tutoring are provided in the afternoon in rotating, 8-10 week cycles.
- The faculty sustains a safe and nurturing environment where students are well known by at least one adult, personal and academic milestones are celebrated contributing to student social-emotional and academic growth.
  - An exemplary advisory program matches a small group of students with a teacher who confers with them regularly one-to-one, communicates as point-person with parents and advocates for any needed individual services. The advisor’ carefully coaches each student’s progress towards graduation and sits on his/her promotion portfolio committee. These practices reinforce the belief that “relationships matter” at Landmark and promote adolescent development and academic success.

- The principal strategically develops leadership in his teachers who take responsibility to avail youth development services and coordinate involvement in programs offered by outside organizations such as those offered by the on-campus health clinic or Theater Development Fund.
- School leadership has a clear vision of where the school is going and leverages important changes through a strategic plan to create instructional coherence and accelerated student progress.
  - Clear school-level improvement goals focus on extended implementation of inquiry and project-based learning, increased credit accrual for students performing in the lowest third and differentiated instruction that addresses the varying learner profiles of English Language Learners and students receiving special education that accelerates their learning.
  - Skillful analysis of school-wide data on student attendance and credit accrual shaped goals. Related action plans targeted Academic Intervention Services for students at-risk, a Collaborative Team Teaching special education model and professional development for all staff to deepen pedagogy aligned with its “instructional identity”. Data monitoring shows increased Junior Institute attendance, successful implementation of Academic Intervention Services and the new special education approach, a significant portion of staff using inquiry strategies, and measured gains towards graduation for students in the lowest third.
- The faculty has many purposeful opportunities for shared reflection, professional learning and leadership development that allow them to hone their practice and produce improved student outcomes.
  - Frequent and extended time blocks for planning and professional collaboration are built into teachers’ schedules enabling them to meet in grade level, department, and Junior and Senior Institute teams weekly and bi-weekly. Meaningful conversations guided by purposeful facilitation distinguish this time. Student needs are addressed, effective strategies exchanged, curriculum maps and common lessons are refined—all resulting continuous improvement of practice.
  - The principal and assistant principal arrange an array in-house professional development options. Examples are intra-visitations to classroom lab sites where targeted strategies are modeled by peers, cohort attendance at workshops focusing on addressing needs of various learner profiles (e.g. Schools Attuned) or adopting assessment for learning strategies, and support by occasional math and literacy consultants. These opportunities “build the intellectual capital” of the faculty to meet student learning needs.
- School leadership has systems in place to evaluate the alignment between what is taught and how it taught to deepen student inquiry resulting in authentic and active learning.
  - A classroom observation protocol is used to ascertain if instructional strategies are consistent with the schools’ core beliefs and commitment to Habits of Mind and active inquiry. This practice serves to evaluate and strengthen coherence in pedagogy school-wide.
  - The School Leadership Team evaluates policies and programs and recommends systemic adjustments such as working to align instruction across advisory

classes. This contributes to on-going monitoring and resulting coherence of curriculum and instruction.

## Areas for Improvement

- Strengthen the capacity of individual teachers and teacher teams to analyze trends in data to better to understand the strengths and needs of student subgroups to improve student learning.
  - While teachers review work portfolios or Periodic Assessments to understand individual student needs and growth over time, subgroup trends are not consistently derived from data to intentionally uncover which learner groups struggle. As a result teachers cannot know if all student groups are progressing steadily with current teaching strategies.
- Expand goal setting process so that all teachers set differentiated goals for a variety of learners and scaffold instructional support aligned with those goals to enhance all students' achievement.
  - Rubrics are used to communicate expectations for quality work on written pieces, presentations or projects. However, most teachers do not establish explicit differentiated learning goals for their individual students or subgroups that need additional support which diminishes teacher ability to tailor instruction to student needs and monitor for progress.
  - Tiered supports derived from clearly differentiated goals for various learners are a less commonly used differentiation strategy but are needed to advance student success with complex performance tasks.
- Extend the existing rich professional collaboration of teacher teams to include an inquiry approach that incorporates analysis of assessment data and student work to target and track student progress towards learning goals.
  - Structured professional collaboration does not consistently center around the study of the impact of selected strategies on targeted groups of students. Without this type of collaborative inquiry, professional collaboration is not maximized to further improve student learning.
- Develop structures to regularly evaluate and adjust systems for assessing, collecting and analyzing data to ensure on-going academic acceleration for all students.
  - Methods for analyzing attendance and credit accrual data were revised this school year to develop a macro-view of progress towards goals. Structures are not fully developed to evaluate school-wide assessment methods, organization and use of data on a more frequent basis. These are needed to increase consistency of use of data across the school.

<b>School name: Landmark High School</b>	△	▶	✓	+
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	△	▶	✓	+
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?				<b>X</b>
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?			<b>X</b>	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?				<b>X</b>
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				<b>X</b>
<b>Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	▶	✓	+
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			<b>X</b>	
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?		<b>X</b>		
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?			<b>X</b>	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>	

<b>Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?				X			
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?		X					
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			X				
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?			X				
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				X			
<b>Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?			X				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			X				
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?				X			
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals 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 progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?				X			
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?		X					
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?			X				
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			X				
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>				X			
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed