

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

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

**High School K454  
223 Graham Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11206**

**Principal: Cara Tait**

**Dates of review: March 6-7, 2013  
Lead Reviewer: Flavia Puello-Perdomo**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Green School: An Academy for Environmental Careers is a high school with 392 students from 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 48% Black, 47% Hispanic, 3% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 80%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal has made purposeful organizational, programming, and hiring decisions in order to support school goals' achievement, strengthen teacher development and improve outcomes for all students. (1.3)
  - The principal established multiple partnerships to support both students and staff. The school partners with the Green Point Youth Court in order to provide students opportunities as Youth Court jury members and Morningside Center for Social Responsibility Grant which conducts workshops on Restorative Justice Framework for the staff. The Arts for All and BRIC Art Media Brooklyn both provide teaching artists that come to the school to support art instruction. These organizations also create opportunities for students to showcase their art work at local art galleries. This large number of partnerships with community organizations and cultural institutions offers students opportunities to engage in real life experiences connected to their interests, thus supporting their long-range trajectory to colleges and careers. Furthermore, based on the instructional needs of the students and teacher feedback, the school leader hired two instructional coaches this year, one to focus on math and science and the other to focus on the humanities in order to support teacher development. The coaches support staff with professional development in curriculum development, data analysis, and developing focused agendas for teacher team meetings, as well as assisting with creating goals and objectives for each department and grade level. Student performance and task are frequently reviewed and analyzed during weekly meetings. In addition, the coaches assist the principal with assessing staff strength and matching them to the student's programming needs. Consequently, teachers are able to develop rigorous learning experiences that allow students to create meaningful work products.
  - The principal redesigned the instructional program and school schedule in order to increase teacher meeting time and course offering. With the implementation of a trimester model students have an opportunity to increase credit accumulation and are able to recover credits in areas where they have accumulated deficiencies. This provides an opportunity for students to gain the necessary courses for an advanced Regents diploma and increases their opportunity to participate in college preparatory courses that were not previously offered at the school, such as Regents Earth Science and Physics, Algebra II/Trigonometry, LOTE Prep Spanish and computer-based AP World History and Calculus. The school also hired a bilingual math teacher as well as bilingual paraprofessional in order to support the growing population of English language learners (ELL). In addition, teachers' assignments for core subjects were adjusted in order to match teachers' strength to the academic needs of students so that students with special needs and ELLs receive appropriate classroom support. As a result, the school has increased the number of students on track for graduation as evident in increased credit accumulation. Furthermore, the number of students meeting or exceeding college readiness has improved as evident in the increased number of students currently on track for an advanced Regents diploma as well as students taking Advanced Placement and College Now courses.

- Using a research-based teaching framework, the principal and instructional coaches provide targeted feedback to teachers that inform professional development plans to improve teacher effectiveness. (4.1)
  - Last year, the school was part of the NYCDOE Teacher effectiveness Pilot, and through this opportunity teachers received frequent feedback using a research-based teacher effectiveness rubric. The feedback was then incorporated into this year's professional development goals for each teacher so that their annual goals are aligned to the Danielson teaching framework. In order to extend the work, the principal, lead teachers, instructional coaches, and teacher teams continue to engage in frequent classroom observation and teachers receive targeted feedback based on the framework. For example, many teachers received feedback around incorporating more DOK level 3 and 4 questions, as well as incorporating assessment check point throughout a lesson and providing a closing assessment at the end of the lesson. The teachers then received professional development in these areas. The school has seen improvement in Danielson 3c and 3b and is beginning to see a common language for expected evidence of effective instruction as per the Danielson's rubric, evident during our classroom visits. The feedback targets areas further development that is identified in teacher's professional development plan. Teacher team work further reinforces development as they share instructional practices. As a result, teacher practice is improving as measured by their progress on the framework continuum.
  - The school has implemented differentiated professional development for all staff members in response to the data from observations and teachers' development plans. Professional development is offered in whole group, subject teams, and individual coaching sessions depending on the needs that were identified by the school leaders and instructional coaches. Teachers received individualized support through "lab sites" where coaches and teachers co-plan and co-teach lessons; then teachers conduct this lesson independently under the observation of a coach who provides immediate feedback on the lesson as well as learning outcomes for students. In addition, the coaches and school leader offer weekly coaching sessions focused on both unit and lesson plan development. Moreover, small group professional development is offered around elements of the Green School instructional CORE that includes strategic grouping and cooperative learning, as the school believes students learn best when working with one another. Additionally, the principal currently mentors and aspires to be a principal from the Leaders in Education Apprenticeship Program (LEAP) and is nurturing teacher leaders across grade level and content in order to develop succession plans and build capacity in the school. As a result of this differentiated approach to professional development, teachers share a common language around the expected evidence for effective instructional practices in relationship to the research-based rubric and the Green School core belief. Moreover, the four year graduation rate increased by 9% for 2011-2012 and is projected to continue increasing for the current school year.
- The school administrator and teacher teams conduct frequent assessments of student performance and analyze these results in order to adjust classroom and school-wide practices, thereby improving student outcomes. (2.2)
  - Teacher teams have developed and incorporated diagnostic and common assessments centered on the targeted priority Common Core standards that were identified for each content area after an item analysis of last's year Regents

results. This has allowed teachers to revise their curriculum maps; therefore, instruction can be targeted and adjusted based on the students' needs. Midterm and final summative assessments in all subjects are implemented in order to provide teachers and students with timely and accurate data to determine student mastery of Regents coursework. Additionally, the school has implemented a grading policy that is aligned with the expectation of Common Core, which clearly targets students' performance instead of students' compliance. For instance, previously, daily attendance weighted heavily into students overall grades, in some cases, there was misalignment between student performance in class and the corresponding standardized assessment. However, this was adjusted so that 'assessment' is 30% of the grade and assisting teachers with developing clear and fair assessments of students. Through a partnership with Common Priorities of Cambridge Education, subject teams are analyzing student data, revising and developing additional department-wide diagnostic assessments aligned to the Common Core standards, and revising curriculum and individual lesson plans to support student acquisition of content and skills. Consequently, teacher instruction is targeted to student's needs and the school has seen improvement in course pass rates and individual student performance on midterms during the second trimester.

- The school has structures in place that support a safe and nurturing environment which results in a positive culture for learning and mutual respect. (1.4)
  - The school implemented a restorative justice model, using student transgressions as learning opportunities. The school believes that this model reflects the school's core values of social justice and allows for student voice to be included. As part of this model, the school Restorative Justice Committee developed a plan for Restorative Justice Integration at the Green School. The plan includes the development of a "fairness committee" where students meet with a group of their peers and discuss the transgression. After the committee reviews the incident, consequences are issued, which range from community service to students completing written reflections on their behavior. Therefore, the school is not limited to just issuing suspension, which the school found did not always improve the targeted behavior. Additionally, teachers have engaged in professional development around classroom management, and the conflict cycle and conflict resolution. Consequently, the school has demonstrated a reduction of level 3 behavioral infractions and improvement in the overall school environment.
  - The school values personalization and takes pride in providing personalized attention to the whole child in order to support their academic growth as well as their personal and social development. Each staff member is an advisor to 10-13 students and meets with them regularly to provide academic support and develop action plans according to students needs. Advisors monitor student progress through the school online grading system, Jupiter grades, check discipline logs, and attendance data in order to develop interventions for improvement or to support students with maintaining their achievement. The school implemented a "graduation angels" program for seniors that were not on track to graduate. For this special advisement program, staff works with 2-3 students to support them by creating a focused plan for their graduation goal. The school is currently incorporating a similar plan in grades 9 and 10 in order to support struggling students with meeting grade promotion. As a result of the angels program, students are more engaged with their educational process and aware of the steps needed for improvement which has resulted in an increase in the school graduation rate

by nearly 10% during the 2011-2012 school year.

## What the school needs to improve

- Develop curricular alignment across grades and content areas to engage all learners in rigorous tasks that deepen their content knowledge and critical thinking skills, hence preparing them for postsecondary success. (1.1)
  - The school has identified key learning standards in all subject areas. These standards are used as the platform to the development of uniform practices for curriculum and unit plan development. However, department teams are at various stages in terms of their development of a Common Core-aligned curriculum and performance tasks, and teacher teams do not follow a uniform method for curriculum development and lesson planning. Most of the unit and lesson plans collected reflected different instructional practices and did not always emphasize the key standards identified for the content area. In addition, the unit maps available do not include questions that drive students' thinking or demonstrate proper scaffolds to promote engagement with rigorous tasks for all learners. Furthermore, some of the units' culminating tasks such as the one observed in the Living Environment class do not require students to engage in work that required higher order thinking related to the subject matter. As a result, instructional practices across content areas and grade levels are inconsistent and academic expectations for students vary across classrooms. Consequently, during classroom visits instructional tasks are not always Common Core-aligned and student work is not equally challenging, hence the uneven levels of quality of work products across classrooms, particularly in some of the Integrated Co-Teaching classroom. As a result, not all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities are able to demonstrate postsecondary readiness.
- Develop consistent instructional practices across classrooms, embedding the school's beliefs related to student learning so students engage in rigorous tasks that promote discussion and critical thinking, resulting in quality student products. (1.2)
  - The school leader and coaches communicate a clear set of instructional expectations to the entire staff guided by the Danielson framework and the citywide instructional expectations. This is evident in their focus on meeting needs of ELLs and students with special needs. Teachers are encouraged and given support to implement strategies that meet the needs of this special population. However, these strategies are not consistent across all classrooms. For instance, in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade English Language Arts classes visited, all students engage in intellectual discussions and build on each other's perspectives. In the math classes visited, through open-ended questions students engaged in mathematical thinking and application of the concepts learned through the use of manipulatives and peer- and whole-class discussions. However, in other classrooms teachers use low-level or rapid fire questioning without allowing adequate wait time for students to engage in discussions which result in uneven levels of student participation and discussion thus limiting access to content. In some classrooms, students are arranged in groups, but demonstrated varying levels of success when completing the assigned task. In addition, some teachers do not offer extended learning opportunities to further engage high achieving students that demonstrate mastery of the material presented in class. As a result, students are not always challenged and engaged by meaningful learning experiences, differentiated according to their level, thus hampering their content knowledge and skill acquisition needed to produce meaningful work products.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

<b>School name:</b> The Green School: An Academy for Environmental Careers	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>				
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, including the arts, physical and health education, 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 that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to curricula, engaging and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?		<b>X</b>					
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels?			<b>X</b>				
<b>School Culture</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			<b>X</b>				
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?			<b>X</b>				
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet students' learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?				<b>X</b>			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?			<b>X</b>				
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework 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?			<b>X</b>				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an <b>inquiry approach</b> that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			<b>X</b>				
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?			<b>X</b>				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>