

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**Rockaway Park High School for Environmental  
Sustainability**

**Q324**

**100-00 Beach Channel Drive  
Rockaway Park  
NY 11694**

**Principal: Jennifer Connolly**

**Dates of review: February 28 - March 1, 2013**

**Lead Reviewer: Tamika Matheson**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Rockaway Park High School for Environmental Sustainability is a high school with 276 students from grade 9 through grade 11. The school population comprises 48% Black, 30% Hispanic, 15% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 58% of the students enrolled and girls account for 42%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 81.7%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Curricula and academic tasks are coherently designed and aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) to promote rigorous habits for a variety of learners. (1.1)
  - The school community engages in extensive professional development around CCLS, Education for Sustainability standards and Depth of Knowledge (DOK) to align curricula and unit tasks to CCLS and instructional shifts, to promote college readiness for all learners, and subgroups. The instructional team consists of Leadership, Aussie coach, network achievement coach and lead teachers, who plan and calibrate school wide instructional expectations. Teachers use a school created unit and lesson templates to plan, revise curricula and units based on student work and data, as evidenced by student grouping during class visits, curriculum maps and unit outlines. Curriculum maps and unit outlines include strategies such as the use of various graphic organizers, visual aids, kinesthetic activities and leveled readings. Additionally, teachers incorporate content area activities and tasks centered on the school's environmental sustainability theme to meet the needs of all students. During class visits student subgroups used scaffolds such as, abridged readings and glossaries to foster comprehension, and rubrics as learning aids. Additionally, teachers across content areas design interdisciplinary projects to challenge students to think analytically through problem solving by identifying and examining solutions and potential consequences. Teachers use the Tri-State Quality Review Rubric, DOK and Bloom's Taxonomy Rigometer to assess the level of rigor and complexity of Learning Voyage units. One example of teachers demonstrating efforts to design and engage students in rigorous instruction and meaningful work products was seen in a 9<sup>th</sup> grade English and science Learning Voyage unit on genetics. Students engaged in fishbowl discussions and debates using accountable talk stems and graphic organizers to reference articles read in class and scenes from the movie, *My Sister's Keeper*. Subsequently, all students including relevant subgroups wrote five paragraph argumentative essays and cited evidence to explain whether or not they supported genetic engineering on plants, animals and human beings. Students received feedback based on a common core aligned writing rubric on their first draft to guide revision. As a result of this rigorous work, the school experienced a bump in Regents pass rates in January 2013: 100% of students passed the Global History Regents as compared to 80% of students in June 2012, and 98% of students passed the English language arts Regents during the school's first administration of the Regents exam.
- Administrators and teachers have embraced a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best across classrooms, and use research based practices, to meet the needs of diverse learners. (1.2)

Teachers consistently use DOK and Bloom's Taxonomy to create performance tasks and generate questions aligned to CCLS. Across

classrooms teachers maintain student portfolios to monitor student progress, design rubrics to set expectations, give students rubric-based feedback and strategically group students. Additionally, students set goals and self-monitor their individual progress. Students stated that teachers provide them with opportunities to self-select assignments and revise their work. Furthermore, various strategies during instruction provide students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, with multiple entry points. For example, students engage in various note-taking strategies, evidence based accountable talk, with and without the use of stems or sentence starters and discussions using academic vocabulary to develop cognitive and critical thinking skills. In social studies and English language arts classes, teachers engage students in guided practice to construct Document Based essay questions and Critical Lens essays. Additionally, students engage in peer review with the use of rubrics, and critique and score anchor papers. In an earth science class, students worked in heterogeneous groups to devise a plan to reclaim and recycle material left behind by super storm Sandy and in an algebra II/trigonometry class students were grouped by ability and assigned leveled tasks. Teachers explained how they analyze 8<sup>th</sup> grade math and English language arts scores, Regents exams item analysis, formative assessments and exit slips to adjust and modify instruction to meet the needs of students. For example, teacher teams use inquiry methods to meet the learning needs of target populations via establishing a baseline and long term goals and identifying and implementing strategies to support student progress. As a result, teachers thoughtfully examine various data strands and engage students in challenging learning tasks to develop cognitive skills and maximize student learning.

- There is a culture of mutual respect among all students and adults that supports the academic and personal growth of all members of the school community. (1.4)
  - The school embraces the belief that “educational focus soars when students learn core values.” The school selected character traits “that exemplify the values that whelp children succeed in school and throughout life.” Each month the school focuses on a different character trait with a weekly emphasis on social skills related to the trait. Faculty and members of the staff model and focus on the trait during class time. Additionally, the school has an active student council that meets weekly with the principal to discuss concerns, school wide initiatives and activities, as evidenced by student council meeting agendas. Students from each grade level are represented on the council and members of the Parent Teacher Association also sit in on student council meetings. Additionally, the school partners with Project Hope to provide professional development for teachers to support emotional learning. Project Hope, based on site, partners with the physical education and health teacher to facilitate workshops for students around bullying, conflict resolution, anger management and resiliency. As a result of the school’s focus on developing character and social-emotional supports, suspension rates have drastically decreased from 82 in 2011-2012 to 18 suspensions. The most recent school survey shows that 84% of students feel safe in school. Guidance counselors work with students in crisis and make off-site referrals to programs such as Safe Space and St. John’s Episcopal

hospital mental health services. Safe Space offers a multitude of services ranging from family support services to after school programs. Guidance counselors encourage parents to sign the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) forms to permit open communication and the exchange of information between outside programs and school personnel to further support students in crisis. To regularly inform students and families of academic progress, students now receive progress report alpha grades and transcripts every 20 days, and the number of parent-teacher conferences has increased from 2 to 4. Additionally, guidance counselors routinely visit classes to debrief services provided by the department to discuss promotion requirements and review student transcripts. Guidance counselors meet weekly with the attendance teacher, and occasionally teachers, to schedule meetings with families whose children have attendance concerns. They collaboratively generate an academic and social-emotional plan to address the needs of students. The school monitors student attendance and progress and conduct “check-in” meetings with students. During meetings students and families expressed that the administration and staff consistently “go above and beyond” to support the success of each student. As a result, 94% of student responses on the School Survey replied that at least one adult at the school knows students by name and 74% of students agreed that adults at the school look out for them.

- Teachers consistently analyze data and examine student work to assess student learning to inform curricula design and instructional decisions across content areas and grade levels. (2.2)
  - The school engages teacher teams in professional development throughout the year around data analysis and inquiry using professional articles, multiple data resources and researched based strategies. Teacher teams use protocols such as the Tuning Protocol and Collaborative Assessment Protocol to surface gaps between student work, instruction, assessments and CCLS instructional shifts. At the beginning of the school year, teachers select 2 sources of data to complete a school created action plan with a specific focus on subgroups. Teachers routinely update data binders with assessment results from, Regents Exams, Item Report (REDS), 8<sup>th</sup> grade New York State Assessment scores, interim and formative assessments, Progress to Graduation (ARIS) and Acuity. Subsequently, teachers generate specific goals for individual and groups of students. Teachers use various methods to share feedback and next steps with students, such as, rubric-specific aligned feedback and next steps, reflection worksheets and peer editing. As per the principal, “data binders triangulate professional development, instruction and student work.” Furthermore, each teacher, department and grade team maintains a data binder to monitor student progress within the class, content area and grade level. Data binders are revisited every 6 weeks for progress and adjustment of goals. Department teams have identified skills to re-teach and monitor, such as “reading and interpreting graphs and graphing” across grades in science and argumentative essay skills identified by English language arts teachers. Grade level teams also review department binders to identify areas of concern and deficit skills. For example, during the 10<sup>th</sup> grade teacher team meeting teachers discussed and analyzed the Geometry Regents from January of 2013 for the team’s target population. Previously, the

team identified skill deficiencies and analyzed the target population's June 2012 Integrated Algebra Regents to identify skills aligned to geometry and the CCLS. The team selected the Power Standard: Congruency, which is aligned to the aforementioned skills and Citywide Instructional Expectations. The team's goal is for 85% or more students to demonstrate mastery of the skill, "calculating distance and mid-point between two points in the coordinate plane." During review of formative assessments the team concluded that the percentage of students scoring at Level 1 decreased by 18%, "The third interim assessment showed 92% of the students scored a Level 3 or Level 4" and 67% of the students demonstrated improvement in this skill between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> interim assessments.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Further augment systems to engage all stakeholders in decision-making processes and school wide improvement in order to advance student learning and social-emotional development. (3.1)
  - Parents and teachers share their commitment to the success of the school and students. However, parents and teachers were unable to articulate school wide goals and explain how the school utilizes multiple resources to provide professional development or extracurricular programs. Teachers explained school goals in broad terms. For example, "preparing the school for college readiness..." and "...making sure that learning is accessible to all students and real world application of learning..." Although teachers engaged in meaningful professional development activities, very few can explain how school wide goals are linked to the CCLS and shifts. Furthermore, when teachers were asked about the academic needs of students with disabilities, some teachers replied that they were given students' Individualized Educational Plans (IEP) while other teachers requested copies of students' IEPs. Without a uniform system for distributing IEPs and Section 504 modifications to teachers in September, there are missed opportunities for timely and cohesive instructional planning of goals for all students including relevant subgroups.
- Continue to build on programs and supports to communicate and engage students and families in high expectations about college and career readiness, and post secondary opportunities. (3.4)
  - The school consistently shares student progress and effectively communicates high expectations all constituency via routine mailings of progress reports, transcripts, and parent conferences. The school has increased the number of advanced placement courses offered to students while offering rigorous coursework in math and science. Furthermore, at the start of the school year, guidance counselors facilitated college and career workshops for eleventh grade students. However, the program was abruptly interrupted by storm Sandy, which led to the displacement of the students and families for two months. Counselors plan to resume college and career readiness workshops in March. Moreover, the majority of students are not offered opportunities to participate in after school rigorous course work and college and career readiness programs, thus limiting student exposure to post secondary experiences. Parents are not

always informed about school partnership, thereby limiting the potential to increase and leverage parent involvement to support student progress toward meeting school wide expectations.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

<b>School name: Rockaway Park High School</b>	<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 inquiry approach 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>