



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

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

**High School K454**

**223 Graham Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11206**

**Principal: Cara Tait**

**Date of review: April 17, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Sheila S.-Gorski**

## The School Context

The Green School is a high school with 266 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 35% Black, 64% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 29% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 78.0%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Developing</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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

The principal and faculty ensure ongoing work to align curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards and intentionally integrate instructional shifts. Teachers use data analysis to make purposeful revisions.

### Impact

Common Core aligned curricula and data-based task adjustments are building coherence across content areas and grades so that a diversity of students have access to the curricula and are cognitively engaged in work that prepares them for college and careers.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers engage in planning units incorporating the Backward Design model for instructional planning. Courses in English language arts (ELA), social studies, and science embed projects and or portfolios as end-of-unit assessments. Subject teams integrate priority standards that they have examined and believe serve as anchors for their units. The school's efforts to ensure alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards are noted in their ELA and math culminating unit projects (CUPS). In grade 9 math, the school implements the Carnegie Math curriculum, initiated three years ago, specifically because it is common core aligned, facilitates emphasis on the instructional shifts, and supports the school's constructivist methodology. The integrated math sequence aligned to the math appendix entails open-ended problems that require students to make inferences, predictions, and model and explain their understanding.
- The social studies team has analyzed the draft of the social studies framework and included document-based analysis in global history exams. Curricula are designed around thematic units. English teachers focus on argumentative writing across all grades. All units include essential elements, such as a lesson objective, an essential question, and an enduring understanding. The structure of lessons includes: modeling, guided practice, and independent practice. Strategies depict Universal Design Learning differentiation within curricula including: sentence starters, multiple graphic organizers, essay outlines, and documents with visuals. The more advanced writer may choose a multiple-choice task that includes writing using document-based questions (DBQs). Also, organizational planning addresses decisions teachers make on grouping students. For example, teachers group students strategically when creating seating plans noting which students are English language learners and/or special education students.
- Analysis of student performance on the January Regents indicated needed revisions to the curricula for focusing on thematic units and incorporating writing across the curriculum. Teacher teams participated in Hochman Writing Skills training and the Global curriculum shifted to a thematic model. Mid-year curriculum conferences provide opportunities for teachers to discuss data analysis, revisions, and plan adjustments. Such adjustments include revisions of lesson plans and re-teaching of particular skills and station work. The science team has also been trained in science literacy and writing through Teachers College. In addition to incorporating writing, the team is focusing on scientific inquiry and close reading of texts in the curriculum.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Developing**

### Findings

Pedagogy demonstrative of a shared set of beliefs and instructional practices in classrooms that embeds scaffolds, entry points, and engagement for all learners across the school is developing.

### Impact

Inconsistency in pedagogy and in provision of multiple entry points into curricula lead to uneven student engagement and demonstration of higher-order thinking in work.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school believes that students learn best, when provided with opportunities to collaborate and learn from one another in rigorous student centered learning activities, and projects with an emphasis on accountable talk and communication through writing. The school promotes student discourse through the use of sentence starters and cooperative learning strategies. Writing strategies include: Role of the Writer-Audience-Format-Topic (RAFT), and the Hochman writing approach, which focuses on sentence development to build complexity and clarity in writing. Within the Integrated Algebra format the school implements exploration strategies to prompt students to discover rules or concepts during math lessons. However, during classroom visits, student groupings and support resources were noted in some classrooms only. For example, while in several math classrooms students held conversations within groups and had access to supports such as calculators, in other classes, questions and discussions were teacher generated and students were mostly quiet. The staff is cognizant of this and is currently working to improve student engagement.
- Teacher-created questions were mostly directed via teacher-to-student with a student-to-teacher response. The majority of questions posed were at recall or knowledge-based levels with few opportunities for students to lead discussions. In one classroom, students were working on analyzing evidence based on a specific perspective. While the topic of discussion was at a high-interest level, based on a recent controversial topic that depicted numerous perspectives on the case of a police traffic stop that ended in the death of an unarmed man, only some students were engaged. The question posed for the students asked them to examine the evidence of the case. However, when students hesitated in responding to the question, the teacher provided the information highlighting the facts of the case from the victim's family's perspective and then from the police officer's perspective with little wait time for thinking and processing. The teacher assumed the mediating role and remained at the center of the discussion.
- A review of lesson plans indicates teachers' knowledge of content, yet the delivery of lessons did not always provide students with the support they needed to complete tasks. For example, students in a math class discussing directions on how to solve a problem were uncertain of what the task required them to do. In an ELA class, students working on the topic of figurative language spoke of how they completed worksheets earlier in the lesson and had already found the controlling idea and were uncertain as to their next steps.

## Additional Findings

**Quality Indicator:**

**2.2 Assessment**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

The school uses common assessments, grading policies, and rubrics aligned to the curricula to track and understand student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas.

### Impact

Consistent monitoring of student growth via analysis of data from common assessments provides actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement and informs effective adjustments to curricula and instruction.

### Supporting Evidence

- Castle Learning finals data, teacher completed trimester analysis documents, Common Core Learning Standards aligned Culminating Unit Projects (CUPS), Jupiter grades audits, and mock Regents are common assessments implemented by the school to monitor student progress and progress toward goals. Teachers across the school use strategies such as, rubrics, conference notes, and listening in and noting student discussion responses to glean information of student progress. Across grades and subjects CUPS are administered and used to assess performance-based specific skills and content mastery. The school's common assessment referred to as, the "Uniform Final Format" is captured in Castle Learning an online assessment administered at the end of each trimester. The grading policy highlights summative assessments that also require students to complete Regents aligned questions on the school's online data platform.
- The school shares an assessment calendar with teachers, students, and families affording everyone knowledge of dates of end-of-unit projects and finals throughout the school year. The calendar entails diagnostics for the purpose of informing differentiated instruction and measuring student progress in literacy and math as well as sample Regents aligned questions and supports for regents preparation. CUPS are also administered and used to assess performance-based specific skills and monitor content mastery.
- The school is grounded in project based learning in grades 9 through 12 that incorporates culminating end-of-unit projects to assess proficiency focusing on best practices using Consortium performance-based assessment as resources. Teams use Backward Design as the instructional model for planning. All courses in ELA, social studies, and science currently use projects and/or portfolios as end-of-unit assessments. These adjustments to the curricula are included in the school's senior exit project. The school highlights the senior exit project as, "The anchor of the department".
- Item analysis is shared with teachers immediately through Google Docs and teachers confer with students about their individual performances and share goals providing feedback to students. Instructional adjustments include revision of lesson plans covering the re-teaching of particular skills, data based station work, groupings and coursework design for newcomer English language learners.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-------------------

### Findings

School leaders communicate high expectations via the Danielson Framework for Teaching regarding professionalism and instruction. The school affords all students consistent feedback and guidance supports.

### Impact

The principal's high expectations and systems to support set expectations have built commitment and accountability within the school community, and promoted a culture of learning and collaboration toward supporting and preparing students for their next level of learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- The principal and faculty have a shared definition of high expectations leveraged by the Danielson Framework for Teaching to set clear expectations for all constituents. As a result, the Green School Theory of Action: Authentic Learning Fosters Achievement was designed with the following elements - real world and relevant learning, whole-person education, school-as-community, collaboration, and empowerment. Within context the school expects curriculum grounded in thematic, data-driven lessons based on enduring understandings to promote academic and behavioral skills. The principal and staff observe student exhibitions, where a presentation of a portfolio of best work includes a completed Intellectual Development letter with reflections on students' learning experiences in all classes. Teachers complete "360s", meaning that each teacher has an opportunity to have a particular classroom practice focused for a month, with teams completing inter-visitations, observing student work protocols, analyzing lesson and unit plans, and providing feedback to the teacher on their instructional focus question. Adults and students work collaboratively via ongoing cycles of inquiry to support high-quality standards-based learning and what the school refers to as a, "Culture of 'Us' " promoting a culture of responsibility noted throughout the school.
- The staff has been trained by the restorative justice coordinator and instructional coach to model key Green School instructional best practices such as the circle model and cooperative learning opportunities. Teachers use techniques such as peer mediation and fairness panels providing students with alternatives to suspension. Grades 11 and 12 have identified student leaders to serve in Peer Group Connections meetings with grade 9 advisories once a week. Team leaders lead activities and provide feedback to students on attendance and credit accumulation.
- The guidance/advisory program includes teachers, incorporates social-emotional strategies, such as the "Circles" model, with the support of Morningside Center for Social Responsibility organization. The Circles curriculum offers students an opportunity to reflect and practice listening and discussion skills, and develops decision-making skills. The school implements Graduation Angels offered to seniors nearly on track for graduation. Staff members who have strong relationships with the students support two to three seniors. Supports include working with students needing to pass Regents exams to graduate, completing college applications for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Seventy-three of 76 seniors have applied to college, and 65 have completed the FAFSA. This is a 50% increase of students on track for graduation after the January regents, as compared to last year. The chancellor, during a school visit shared, "I would love to see Principal Tait share some of her resources, which include student-to-student mentoring, Advanced Placement courses, and Academic Intervention Services, with the two schools co-located in her building."

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
---------------------------	---	----------------	-------------------

### Findings

A majority of teachers are engaged in professional collaborations. Key decisions made by teacher teams inform instructional improvements in practice and at the classroom level throughout the school.

### Impact

Teacher teams use student work and data analysis to inform instructional changes, making key decisions that affect the learning across the school.

### Supporting Evidence

- Grade teams meet weekly. Subject teams meet as a part of the professional development time and follow the Tuning Protocol to review student work. Grade teams review student progress data as aligned to graduation requirements shared via Google spreadsheets and the school’s online data platform, Jupiter Grades. Teachers are afforded administrative level access to Jupiter grades to ensure collective access to the data needed to make informed decisions in support of implementing the Common Core Learning Standards.
- Teachers engage in key leadership roles including, grade and subject team leaders, instructional coaches, and restorative justice coordinators. Grade teams are designed to make informed instructional and curricula decisions using student data, for instance, to design grade-wide themes, structures for annotation, close reading and note taking. Additionally, teacher teams follow a five week cycle beginning with work analysis during week one, unit planning during week two, classroom visits during week three, student work analysis during week four, and reflections and unit plan analysis. Throughout the cycles teachers present their students’ CUPs, using a rubric to measure proficiency levels of: approaching proficiency, proficient, and highly proficient. Teams also use the Fly on the Wall protocol providing feedback and suggestions to the presenting teacher. Data parties called “Darties” are events where teachers are provided data-analysis and thought questions to review. These processes support teachers and build their professional capacity. For example, during the last school year, increased teacher capacity as measured in by the Danielson rubric in using questions and discussion techniques and using assessments in instruction is demonstrative during classroom observations with 85% of teachers earned an “Effective” in both categories.
- Teams assess pedagogical practice conducting inter-visitations, using student work protocols, analyzing lesson and unit plans, and providing feedback to teachers regarding their instructional focus question. School supervisors attend team meetings periodically and provide feedback to teams. Shared minutes on Google Docs serve as informative and transparent instructional work and as a shared accountability tool where all teachers share their work.
- During a team meeting teachers discussed grade 11 United States History student work. Teachers shared that the student did well on the CUP but noted the need for work on transitions. Also, they discussed plans to include scaffolds in the writing for seniors to support breaking down the writing into parts so that students could embed their opinions in their writing better with supportive evidence in argumentative essays requiring extensive writing of approximately 10 pages.