Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Green School: An Academy for Environmental Careers
High School 14K454
223 Graham Ave.
Brooklyn
NY, 11206

Principal: Cara Tait

Dates of Review:
November 9, 2016 - November 10, 2016

Lead Reviewer: Marion Wilson
### The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Celebration** to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Focus** to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as **Additional Finding**. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

### Information about the School


### School Quality Ratings

#### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Quality Ratings continued

### School Culture

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>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</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>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</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings

Across the vast majority of the school, teachers are engaged in Japanese Lesson Study to promote the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards, which results in schoolwide coherence across grades. There are model teachers and department lead teachers who plan and implement many structures across the school that affect student learning.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has impacted the implementation of best practices across the school and has resulted in greater progress toward graduation and higher Regents course passage rates. Teachers have changed the format, structure and focus of teamwork, and of professional development offerings, which have helped to improved rubric ratings for students culminating in more students taking and passing Advanced Placement (AP) courses and in significant improvement on the college readiness index.

Supporting Evidence

- The use of Japanese Lesson Study across teams has helped to strengthen teacher’s instructional capacity in key areas as measured by ADVANCE observation reports. Teaching practices, such as the incorporation of more checks for understanding throughout the lesson, student-to-student conversations, and students creating their own questions, have dramatically improved. Teachers are more reflective of their teaching practices and more willing to change practices for immediate results. A significant number of English Language Learners (ELLs) are more proficient in reading and writing as measured by NYSELAT results. Teachers hold themselves accountable for all students in all grades. One teacher shared, “If one student fails, then we all fail, so we have to ensure that we are all doing what we can to help all students achieve and perform at their highest potential.”

- Teachers shared their roles in generating various proposals for several key initiatives and the collaborative decision-making process that was made in favor of implementing them. For example, teachers submitted a proposal to become a Progressive Redesign Opportunity School for Excellence (PROSE) school and to have model teachers. In addition, teachers planned the staff’s beginning of the year retreat along with the instructional focus for the school year. The school has a new grading policy, which incorporates habits-of-work grades as well as student performance data. This idea was generated by teacher input after closely examining student engagement and performance across classes. As a result, these strategic decisions have helped the school see success in their efforts.

- Administration, teachers and department leads articulate how their work with lesson study, advisories, college prep programs, and the other projects have helped shape the culture and atmosphere of the school’s community in a positive direction. Teachers have autonomy to take risks with implementing new pedagogical strategies, curriculum tools, and programs with support from administration. Teachers complete Google surveys on a weekly basis and provide feedback to administration on what they are teaching and what professional development should look like to support their efforts. In turn, administration utilizes this information to have teachers facilitate professional learning or garner outside support based on teacher feedback and needs.
Findings

Across most classrooms teachers utilize varying strategies such as Depth of Knowledge (DOK) question stems, experience charts, translated notes, manipulatives, and technology supports to support all students, and especially ELLs and students with disabilities, in developing rigorous work habits and higher-order skills in Advanced Placement and regular classes. Most, not all classes, displayed meaningful student work products that demonstrate evidence of student-centered discussions and critical thinking.

Impact

Teaching strategies provide multiple entries points that aid student comprehension, problem solving, and participation across subject areas and that afford ELLs and students with disabilities access to producing differentiated work products of the same rigorous content material. Most students are able to share their thinking through varied modes, written, or verbal presentations in a thoughtful manner.

Supporting Evidence

- The Hochman Writing program is used to support learners across most disciplines and to help students make stronger connections among their reading, thinking, and writing. There are strategies to help students improve their clarity in writing including writing argumentative essays, and organized research papers. For example, in a grade nine English Language Arts (ELA) class, while there was a language paraprofessional present to support mainstreamed ELLs, some students still struggled to produce work that met expectations for the assignment. There was a lack of extensions for higher performing students who could benefit from more challenging writing materials.

- Students have opportunities to work independently, in pairs, or groups depending on the activity. For example, in a dual language bilingual class, students watched a video on in English to respond to the prompt, “How are Judaism, Christianity, and Islam related?” A few students struggled to engage in conversation with their partners about the video. Students received some supports such sentence starters and different graphic organizers to support their efforts, but there were missed opportunities for teachers to strategically provide supports to help these students work more independently without being reliant on a partner or on having to ask for teacher assistance.

- Across most classrooms, there was evidence of the school’s implementation of Kagan strategies and structures for accountable talk to allow students to work cooperatively and also to communicate their thinking. In one class visited, students participated in an academic conversation protocol, which included multiple rounds with students rotating roles during each round giving students an opportunity to experience various perspectives and positions. Each student had a role such as speaker, listener, recorder, and observer. At the end of the lesson, the group had to synthesize the conversation and decide who made the strongest argument. There were missed opportunities for the teacher to encourage this type of structure in classes with more ELLs.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula across subject areas are interdisciplinary and purposefully integrate the instructional shifts, which promote college and career readiness for all students. Academic tasks and unit plans are refined and modified utilizing the school’s system of the school’s redesign lesson plan called a “remix” to modify existing plans based on student profiles and student work.

Impact

The school’s curricula is located on Google drive which affords all departments and grades continuous opportunities to influence the planning and modification of strategically aligned units based on student need. A diversity of students have opportunities to think critically across subject areas and to be cognitively challenged and engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- All Common Core aligned units and tasks require cooperative learning activities, strategic grouping of students, essential questions, specifically referenced Depth of Knowledge (DOK) questions, and prompts with differentiation to meet the needs of all learners. Utilizing a backwards design planning model for all curricula plans, cross department teachers engage in a Japanese Lesson Study process to ensure that there is a solid connection within and across grades to identify priorities. Academic vocabulary, writing from sources, managing text complexity, creating coherence from previously taught materials, and engaging in the dual intensity of practice and understanding are the school’s main identified priorities contained in lesson plans. Some examples of tasks included: asking students to evaluate their peer’s point of view, expecting students are able to support clear claims and logical reasons, annotating complex text, sequencing transformations, explaining the strategies utilized, and explaining and analyzing the impact of belief systems on people during a specific time period.

- There are clearly defined criteria established for what it means to exit each grade with clear connections to the anticipated enduring understandings of post-secondary work. Through the use of a schoolwide Google document, all curricula material is accessible so that each unit strategically builds upon learning from a previous grade independent of the discipline. There is an inter-disciplinary approach to curricula mapping across science, ELA, math and social studies whenever appropriate. There are “Essential Skills” that spiral tasks across grades. For example, in an ELA unit plan, the writing tasked required students to make connections, analyze evidence, and support the significance of their claims through one of the following lenses: Marxist, Gender, or Race.

- Each part of a lesson is examined based on student data gathered from formative and summative assessments to revise plans. These plans are known as the “remix” and contain input from students representing a diversity of learners on what worked well and what could be improved. Each teacher is responsible for completing a modification to support all learners and to document supports for all subgroups including, but not limited to, ELLs, students with disabilities, gifted students, the lowest third, and Black and Latino males. Engaging tasks include multiple investigatory opportunities within units of study that are constantly revisited and tweaked. Teachers complete reflections after every lesson and pay particular attention to the shifts they were focused on and must answer the following questions: “What was my student able to accomplish? Where did my students get stuck? What were some of my immediate wonderings and noticings? What were the strengths, and what areas needs to be improved upon?” As a result, tasks are planned and refined so a diversity of learners is cognitively engaged.
### Findings

Teacher-created common assessments help to determine student progress toward individual student goals across grades and subjects, and the results are used to adjust curricula and teaching practices. Teachers regularly check for student understanding before, during, and after instruction to make needed adjustments in response to students’ learning needs and feedback.

### Impact

The use of common assessments supports student progress and mastery toward goals. Exit tickets, entrance slips, and student self-assessment notes help teachers make on-the-spot adjustments to instructional practices across most subject areas.

### Supporting Evidence

- Performance-based assessments (PBAs) and culminating unit projects (CUPs) are required of students across most grades and subject areas. The information derived from the CUPs are used to track students by cohorts through the New Vision's data sorter so teachers can monitor student performance. Teachers know whether they should spiral back or can continue on through the use of formative assessment tools like exit slips and conferencing with students. Through the use of diagnostic and periodic assessments, results from these assessments specifically target schoolwide priority standards and are revised regularly through collaboration of teacher teams. Evidence is used to measure student performance across most subjects. Teams use information to come to consensus on the design of assessments to try to accurately measure student performance towards stated goals.

- Learning targets are written in the form of “I Can” statements to ensure that students understand what is expected of them by the end of the day’s lesson. Students are able to articulate how they will be assessed based on the lesson’s objectives and are able to understand the expectations for the quality of their work. The school also utilizes a trimester analysis reflection protocol to collectively examine objectives previously taught and to consider how adjustments can be made to the curricula. Teachers also use information from the Regents item analysis form to revise curricula for students based on past performance and to generate a list of pre-requisite skills needed to demonstrate proficiency on a given task.

- Most students are able to share their level of understanding of the subject matter with teachers throughout lessons. Students in the small group meeting shared that their teachers ask many different types of questions during lessons to check their understanding before moving on. They also shared that they have to inform the teacher whether they can work independently or whether they need assistance from a partner or the teacher. Most students engage in self-assessment or peer-assessment work to monitor themselves on a regular basis across subjects. Students are generally aware of their overall next learning steps. Students have access to and utilize the school’s online grading platform where they also collect information from their own assessments and provide input into what works for them during instructional time.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations with teachers via email, the weekly Green Gazette newsletter, and the online web portal, provide training and hold teachers accountable for the attainment of these expectations. Staff members establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectation for students, and students receive actionable feedback to support their current level and prepare them for the next level.

Impact

Teachers receive support towards meeting the high expectations of school leaders through professional development, through one-on-one conferences with administration, and through meetings and planning with model teachers. Students receive guidance to help them meet expectations of performance in current and future grade levels.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal shares her expectations with staff about their teaching performance, responsibilities, and professionalism through formal and informal observations, verbal and written communication such as the weekly Green gazette newsletter. There are ongoing workshops, a staff handbook, and other tools and structures to help teachers internalize their responsibilities to the students. There are plans to help address and improve teaching practices around more student-to-student discourse, student engagement, and increased opportunities for students to reflect on their own work. Through dedicated professional meeting and common planning periods through a PROSE program initiative, teachers work in teams to create higher-order thinking questions for their classes. Teachers shared that the principal shares her vision with them and supports their efforts.

- Teachers have opportunities to work in groups and teams on a daily basis to plan lessons, to analyze student data, to conduct training sessions, or to share learning opportunities with each other. Teachers and the administration continue to refine their practices to ensure that their efforts result in higher levels of student mastery and growth. For example, there was a retreat held in the beginning of the year where teachers helped to design the professional development format, and they were able to share their ideas about changes for the new school year they would like to see implemented. Model teachers designed plans to support teachers who were new to the building to expedite their transition. New teachers have been provided training and are showing progress in meeting expectations of performance as shared by administration and their colleagues.

- There are student-led conferences where teachers hold students accountable for understanding their next steps. Students are able to speak to the importance of their work habits, such as being on time, persevering in tasks, organizing for effort among other factors, as it will help them in college and in the work force. Students participate in a program where they take classes at Medgar Evers College to earn college credit in English and U.S. History. Students also receive emails from their advisors, college and career counseling, and are encouraged to take more Advanced Placement courses. All students beginning in grade nine visit local colleges and are assigned to a College and Career Coach who works with a small cohort of students on a daily basis to help them complete each step of the application process including college essay writing and applying for financial aid. Approximately seventy percent of students graduate within a four-year time period and attend college. There is a transcript evaluation form starting in grade nine that provides information to students, teachers, and families so that everyone knows whether students are on track to graduate.
**Findings**

The school uses the *Framework for Effective Instruction* (FEI) observation protocol to highlight areas of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* that articulate clear expectations for practice. Professional development pods are based on teacher interest and administration observation that support teacher growth and development.

**Impact**

As a result of feedback from administration and on professional learning, teachers have incorporated more student discussion protocols. Teachers provide weekly input through Google surveys into the design of professional learning opportunities that have contributed to increased teacher ratings in ADVANCE.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Observation loops include post-observation conference opportunities where teachers and administration meet to discuss high leverage areas that will lead to a shift in teaching practices. Teachers select a time for administration to observe them experimenting with the new practice and the subsequent feedback helps them continue to refine their work. The school’s affiliation in a Learning Partners Program (LPP) helps to support teachers to improve their practice through intervisitation with other schools on best practices for facilitating student discourse. Feedback accurately captures teachers’ strengths, challenges, and next steps based on Danielson. Administration feedback matched areas teachers continued to work on. For example, an earlier observation report from a teacher visited shared that while the teacher gave students several opportunities to turn and talk to one another, the teacher should improve the questioning and discussion technique by allowing students to restate what a peer shared in their own words instead of the teacher restating. The principal pointed out that this would help the teacher better monitor student understanding and push students to more than just agreeing or disagreeing.

- Sample teacher observations demonstrate growth on select teachers moving from developing to effective practices for select components. The FEI tool is used to capture additional evidence of teacher performance, strengths, challenges, and clear next steps in addition to the ADVANCE observation. This tool captures the percentage of the lesson that the teacher dedicates to allowing students to investigate new knowledge and to synthesize new learning. It also assess how prepared teachers are to launch the lesson. This practice further supports teachers’ changing teaching practices as teachers receive feedback based on the articulated expectations for performance. The school is in the process of allowing more teachers to do this type of work and to also give feedback to each other using this tool.

- Teachers complete lesson reflections on what went well and what needs to be worked on, and the results are used in coordination with a weekly Google survey sent to staff to inform each Monday’s professional learning activity. There are mentors for new teachers, and the school continues to refine its model of garnering more teacher input to build sustainable effective instructional practices. The school’s professional development calendar includes teacher input and feedback, and the work is coordinated and led by model teachers in collaboration with administrative support. While administration continuously incorporates and solicits staff input into all decision-making processes and structures, further work is needed so that there is greater teacher input into teacher tenure decisions and teacher assignments.