



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Community Roots Charter School

**51 Saint Edwards Street
Brooklyn, NY 11205**

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Dates of review: May 21, 2007

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Community Roots Charter School opened in 2006 and there are now 100 students in Kindergarten through grade 1. There are plans to expand the school by one grade each year so that it becomes a Kindergarten through grade 5 school. The school is located in the Fort Greene section of Brooklyn. The school is housed on the third floor of a building that is shared with Public Schools 67 and 369. The school population consists of a rich mixture of cultures with 58% Black, 23% White, 12% Asian and 7% Hispanic. Special education students account for 11% of the population but there are no English language learners. The school is Title 1 eligible with 46% of students qualifying, which is lower than similar schools and the City average. Attendance at 93% is above that of similar and comparable to City schools. There have been no suspensions from the school. Student attrition is low with four students leaving the school because their families moved out of the area and two students moving to other schools. No students have yet been entered for state tests and this is the first review report for the school. The co-directors are the founders of the school and are supported by a Board of Trustees.

A charter school is a public school, freed from some of the bureaucracy of the regular public schools. They have the freedom to design curriculum, to hire teachers and to allocate resources to best meet the needs of their students. Charter schools must accept students by lottery and cannot screen children for admissions. Students attending charter schools qualify for all of the same services as those attending regular public schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school is making impressive progress as a new school in raising student performance and expectations.
- The co-directors provide forward looking and collaborative leadership so that their enabling approach encourages all staff to adopt very positive attitudes to their work.
- Teachers and support staff are committed to the vision for the school and work very well as a team.
- The positive culture and environment encourages students to behave well and enjoy their time at school.
- The majority of teaching actively engages students and many teachers demonstrate very good practice.
- The unique curriculum is embedded in a meaningful real world context and provides valuable assessment data in order to monitor and improve student performance.
- Intervention services are very well managed and give targeted support for students who require additional help with their work.
- There is a creative program of professional development that is clearly focused on improving instruction and accelerating the progress of students.
- The school works closely with parents who greatly value the work of the school.
- The school is continually evaluating its performance and seeking new ways to improve the learning and progress of the students.
- Clear expectations are set for incoming board members.
- Adequate internal controls and segregated staff functions are in place.
- The school has established a Parent Teacher Association (PTA).
- Parents are highly satisfied with the school and see strong potential in the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Further analyze and use assessment information with particular reference to differences in gender, ethnic groups, grades, teachers and similar schools.
- Develop an effective assessment system to measure more accurately the skill areas in mathematics.

- Create a strategic action plan for the school with clear priorities, plans of action, measurable success criteria and monitoring arrangements.
- Develop further the use of technology as a tool for teaching and learning.
- Introduce a more formalized system for the monitoring and evaluation of teacher performance.
- CRCS' board may want to consider establishing a benchmark that clearly outlines progress towards goals.
- Tag DYCD funded assets as "property of DYCD."
- The School board may consider creating a strategic plan.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

Community Roots Charter School is a new school and is making very good progress in raising student performance and expectations. There are good assessment systems in place to track individual students' progress although the school is revising the system in mathematics. This is the first year of the school so it is not yet fully analyzing all the available performance data. Intervention programs support students who require additional help with their work. There is a detailed scope and sequence for each subject area with regular assessments and explicit exit outcomes. Outcomes and goals for students are clear and understood by parents and their children. The majority of teaching actively engages students and many teachers demonstrate very good practice. Collaborative teaching in all classes allows the teachers to effectively address the individual needs of students. Regular observation of teachers forms an important part of improving instruction in the classroom. The school recognizes the need for introducing a more formalized system for the monitoring and evaluation of teacher performance.

The co-directors provide forward looking and collaborative leadership so that their enabling approach encourages all staff to adopt very positive attitudes to their work. The school is continually evaluating its performance and seeking new ways to improve the learning and progress of the students. It is now appropriate for the school leaders to create a strategic action plan for the school with clear priorities, plans of action, measurable success criteria and monitoring arrangements.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school is making a good start in using assessment data in order to track the progress of individuals and groups of students. It is actively using this information to inform interventions, instruction and groupings in classes. The administrators demonstrate a good understanding of the performance and progress of each student although they are not yet analyzing the differences between subject areas, classes and grades. The school is in its first year so no students have taken the State or City standardized assessments. The aim of the school is that 75% of students will meet or exceed expectations on the standardized tests by scoring levels 3 or 4.

The school is using an adequate range of data to understand individual student performance and progress. ECLAS-2 is used to measure progress in literacy and the Diagnostic Reading Assessment is used for recording progress in reading. The school is developing its own assessments in each subject that are matched to the scope and sequence in each area. There is now a system of exit outcomes for each subject that summarizes the skill expectations for each unit of work. External assessments do not fully cover the skill areas in mathematics. Running records and conferencing provide detailed records for reading and writing. The co-directors meet regularly with grade teams and

individual teachers to discuss student progress. Early results indicate a continuous increase in performance across the subjects with very good rates of progress in literacy. The school has developed effective systems to record the performance and progress of English language learners and special education students. All intervention programs screen students using reading and mathematics assessments in order to address the needs of level 1 and 2 students. Higher attaining students are identified by the academic intervention services. The school does not compare differences in performance or progress of ethnic groups. High performing schools are identified as comparators but there is no analysis of results in other empowerment or similar schools.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student’s next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student’s learning.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

Detailed records are kept on individual students for each of the subject areas. Student progress is reviewed at regular grade meetings. The exit outcomes for each subject provide very clear goals for each student although measurable goals for individual students and classes are not necessarily based on previous performance. Regular teacher assessments ensure that skill levels are recorded for each student. Individual conferencing provides opportunities for teachers to set goals for students and explain how they can improve their work. Intervention programs support students who require additional help with their work. The child study team meets once a week and quickly identifies students who are at risk of scoring below grade levels. Extra support is provided in reading, mathematics and speaking English. Struggling readers are supported through a variety of reading programs. The learning specialist works with small groups both in and out of the classroom. The art and science teachers provide additional ‘push in’ support for students during their non teaching periods. The school plans to extend intervention as part of the after school program. The school works closely with parents who greatly value the work of the school. Communication with the parents is good and this supports student achievement. Parents and caregivers are provided with regular progress reports that are detailed and informative. Attendance at parent-teacher conferences is excellent. Teachers share conference notes and portfolios so that parents are informed of their child’s progress and goals. Parents are given teachers’ phone numbers in order to encourage regular discussion of student progress. Parents are alerted quickly if their child is having learning difficulties. Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress are at the heart of the school in line with the empowerment goal that all pupils can achieve success.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

The integrated and practical based curriculum is linked to the real world context and provides valuable assessment data to monitor and improve student performance. The school uses the readers and writers workshop well so that there have been significant gains in student progress. There is a detailed scope and sequence for each subject area

with regular assessments and explicit exit outcomes. Community open workshops on Wednesday afternoons provide a fascinating range of electives for the students. Enrichment and extension work is made available for the higher achieving students.

The assignment of teachers and the scheduling of classes are clearly guided by the drive to improve student performance. Teaching teams are carefully selected to match assistant teachers with lead teachers in each class. Each teacher has a planned 'schedule for the day' that ensures a balanced program of subjects for each class. Budgeting decisions are clearly focused on improving students' performance. The investment in collaborative teaching is supporting accelerated student progress while the resourcing of classroom libraries helps literacy development.

The majority of teaching actively engages students and many teachers demonstrate very good practice. Teachers use assessment information well in order to plan and differentiate their instruction. Groups within classes are carefully organized based on the skills of the students. Collaborative teaching in all classes enables the teachers to effectively address the individual needs of students. The high quality and imaginative display work provides a stimulating environment for learning. Students thoroughly enjoy their lessons and are really interested in the subject materials selected. There are opportunities to further use of technology as a tool for teaching and learning.

There are good systems of guidance in place and personnel who support the performance and personal development of students. Students speak highly of the support from teachers although they are encouraged to positively sort out their own problems. Good attendance reflects highly on the teachers and students, and is rigorously monitored and good attendance rewarded.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The co-directors provide forward looking and collaborative leadership so that their enabling approach encourages all staff to adopt very positive attitudes towards their work. Teachers greatly appreciate the emphasis on instruction and the detailed preparation they received before the opening of the new school. Teachers and support staff are committed to the vision for the school and work very well as a team.

Staff are rigorously selected on their potential to improve student performance. All teachers have to complete a demonstration lesson as part of their interview. The quality of appointments has been high and experienced staff bring considerable strengths and energy to the school. There is a creative program of professional development that is clearly focused on improving instruction and accelerating the progress of students. Training meetings are held each week and visits are arranged to other schools within the empowerment network. The mentor and mentee relationship within each class provides very effective staff development.

Lesson observations are well established in the school and all teachers have an informal observation by the co-directors with constructive feedback at least once each week. Teachers adopt an open approach to advice and support. The co-directors know their teachers well but there is not yet a formalized system for the monitoring and evaluation of

teacher performance. Intervisitations between colleagues are not fully developed to share good classroom practice. Child study, grade and classroom teams meet regularly in order to evaluate and review plans. The school runs very smoothly on a day to day basis because expectations and procedures are clear and understood by all.

The school is well supported by a number of outside organizations that help the school achieve its academic goals. Brooklyn Academy of Music provides an imaginative creative arts program for all students while Capoeira Brooklyn organizes additional dance and martial arts workshops. The excellent links with Fort Greene Park enables practical experience to support science and environment topics.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school is continually evaluating its performance and seeking new ways to improve the learning and progress of the students. The school has embraced charter status in order to make a difference so that all students can be successful. The regular meetings provide opportunities for all teachers to contribute to school development and to take full part in evaluation and planning. The curriculum maps and the exit outcomes provide clear expectations for student performance and progress. Intervention strategies are regularly monitored in order to evaluate the effectiveness of support strategies for students at risk. The school does not at present have a clear whole school plan with target goals. The leadership acknowledges that it is now important to create a strategic action plan for the school with clear priorities, plans of action, measurable success criteria and monitoring arrangements. The Board of Trustees is very supportive but its role is not clearly understood by parents and it is not fully involved in the monitoring of school plans. There is a well-defined assessment program throughout the school so that student progress is closely monitored and parents are alerted if grades are unsatisfactory. Students who need extra support are identified and intervention strategies are quickly implemented. Teachers also use the interim assessments to adapt their teaching plans and groupings.

The school is continually reviewing progress and adjusting strategies. For example, many of the original curriculum maps have been extended and modified due to experience in the classroom. In the same way, the school replaced the Diagnostic Reading Assessments with the DIBELS assessments in order to gain a more accurate representation of literacy proficiency. Overall, the school has made a very good start during the first year and it has good capacity to improve as it moves on to the next stage of its development.

Quality Statement 6 – School’s Board has provided “effective” oversight and leadership as needed and is functioning in accordance with the agreed upon charter.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The Board is responsible for the overall direction and fiscal well being of the school. As such, the Board has the authority and duty to adopt policies and by-laws that are necessary to meet its statutory responsibilities and produce optimal academic results. Those administrative and daily operational responsibilities need to be delegated to principals, senior management/administrators, and board appointed officers to manage the school within the established policies. The principal senior administrators, and board appointed officers should then be held accountable for performance.

Community Roots Charter School’s (CRCS) board of trustees is functioning as stipulated by charter contract. The board is equipped with legal, fundraising, finance, entrepreneur, community member, parent representative, teacher, and education expertise to continue providing guidance in policy implementation. The board consists of education, executive, finance, and facilities committees. The board has a formal evaluation process to evaluate the school leaders. The board understands the significance of having parent and community engagement as part of the school’s vision and has a parent and a community member join the board. However, additional strategic planning, goal setting and how to reach those specific goals needs to happen.

The board of trustees has been presented with sufficient financial and other relevant information during board meetings to make informed decisions and work collaboratively towards the school’s stated mission. With several other competing priorities, the board may want to consider adopting a document that integrates the school’s progress towards goals stated in the charter. The board approved budget is consistently monitored and compared to year-to-date expense, variance analyzed, and justifications provided by staff. The budget preparation process involves board members, teacher inputs, school leader, and school’s business manager. Finally, the board has adequately provided oversight in several aspects of school operations.

Quality Statement 7 – School has developed internal controls in place to detect and prevent financial fraud. School has written policies to guide ongoing operations and those policies are followed by school employees.

This area of the school’s work is well-developed.

CRCS maintains excellent internal controls to prevent fraud and the school has done well in segregating staff functions. The school is advised to tag *all* fixed assets (including DYCD assets) that will help the school become an efficient organization and strengthen the asset balance sheet. A sampling of invoices, purchase orders, and proof of payment was conducted during the site visit. No material weakness was found. CRCS has proper documentation in place and the school is following policies adopted by the board of trustees.

Quality Statement 8 – Based on the most recent financial statements, school is in sound fiscal condition.

This area of the school’s work is well-developed.

A charter school should be able to operate with an annual budget that reflects the expected revenue and expenses for the fiscal year. Since the revenue stream for charter schools tend to be based upon the number of students served (per pupil revenue) and the State and Federal grant (Title funding, etc...) funding, a continued and growing negative net balance poses threat to school’s stability and the ability to fulfill its short and long-term financial obligations.

CRCS is in its first year of operation and will provide its audited financial statements on November 1, 2007. At that point, OCS will analyze the expenses incurred on education and administrative expenses as well as school’s financial outlook.

Quality Statement 9 – School has the structure to integrate parents and community partners in the school.

This area of the school’s work is well-developed.

Parents hold a positive opinion about the school in this category. They praised the school’s collaborative environment, orientation, curriculum, and staff dedication. Parents were informed of the board meeting. CRCS has various planned parent awareness events and meeting opportunities in place to encourage continued parent and community participation.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Community Roots Charter School	∅	✓	+
Quality Score			

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> each student, classroom, grade level, 		X	
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 		X	
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> all other categories of interest to the school* 		X	
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.	X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 1		X	

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.		X	
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.			X
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.			X
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.			X
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.			X
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.			X
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.	X		
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.		X	
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X	

Quality Statement 6 – School’s Board has provided “effective” oversight and leadership as needed and is functioning in accordance with the agreed upon charter.	∅	✓	+
6.1 The Board size, structure and composition are appropriate. The membership is diverse (G/S/E) and compliments a broad skill set.		X	
6.2 Board functions as stipulated by contract, and is a well-functioning organization.		X	
6.3 Board has adopted and communicated the whistleblower policy with staff members.		X	
6.4 Board has provided effective oversight in operational, fiscal, academic, hiring & firing (as appropriate) issues of the school.		X	
6.5 Board conflicts (if any) were resolved in timely fashion and had no effect on school operations.			X
6.6 Board evaluates partner organization at least once a year. OCS was notified of any changes in partnership agreement.	n/a		
6.7 Board has been responsive to both parent and school staff concerns/complaints (if any)		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 6		X	
Quality Statement 7 – School has developed internal controls in place to detect and prevent financial fraud. School has written policies to guide ongoing operations and those policies are followed by school employees.	∅	✓	+
7.1 School has a comprehensive financial control system in place. Check signing, procurement, inventory controls, bank reconciliation, travel reimbursement, investment, petty cash, conflict of interest, vacation and sick leave, bonus relocation, etc. policy is in place.			X
7.2 School has segregated staff duties to prevent and detect fraud.			X
7.3 School is consistently following its adopted financial procedures for requisition approval, certification of funds and placing of orders for goods.			X
7.4 School’s employees are familiar with school’s established financial procedures.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 7			X
Quality Statement 8* – Based on the most recent financial statements, school is in sound fiscal condition.	∅	✓	+
8.1 School’s total educational expense / total expense ratio is above 70% for this fiscal year.		N/A	
8.2 School’s administrative ratio is under 30% for this fiscal year.		N/A	
8.3 School’s current ratio is greater than or equal to 2.0.		N/A	
8.4 School’s debt to asset ratio is less than or equal to 1.0.		N/A	
Overall score for Quality Statement 8		N/A	
Quality Statement 9 – School has structure to integrate parents and community partners in the school.	∅	✓	+
9.1 School has a parent organization or a parent teacher organization.			X
9.2 School has special events for parents to meet, discuss issues and socialize with each other.			X
9.3 Parents are informed of the time and location of the open Board meetings.			X
9.4 Newsletters are sent in all predominant languages of the neighborhood to encourage parent participation and eliminate cultural and language barriers.			X
9.5 Parent handbook stipulates the appeals process should a conflict arise.			X
9.6 Has a clear idea of how the pupil has improved since attending this school.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 9			X

*Note on Statement 8: School’s current year in operation and other extenuating circumstances (facilities acquisition, capital renovation, etc..) will be taken into account while assigning a grade.