



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Howard Beach School

Public School 146

**98-01 159 Avenue
Queens
NY 11414**

Principal: Ms Mary Reilly

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Reviewer: Chris Andrews

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Howard Beach School is a pre-kindergarten through grade 6 school, with 521 students. This is the first year in which there are 6th grade students in the school, as it is growing into a full pre-kindergarten to grade 8 school by 2008-09. There are 82 special education students (16%) and 23 English language learners (5%). The majority of the students are White (66%) but there are also Hispanic (25%), Asian (4%) and Black (5%) students. The average attendance figure of 93.7% is good, and is comparable with similar schools and slightly above the City average. The school is not entitled to Title 1 funding for its students.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Teachers have a clear understanding of the performance and progress of their students because of their effective use of data.
- The support given to students in greatest need is excellent.
- The school has high expectations of its students, who in turn expect to be challenged in their work.
- Teachers differentiate their teaching in a variety of ways in order to provide appropriate instruction for their students.
- Resources are effectively deployed to meet the needs of the students and the school's goals.
- Students are engaged by the majority of their classes, and they enjoy coming to school.
- Professional development is well aligned to the needs of the school and of the teachers.
- The principal is respected as an instructional leader and as a person capable of effectively managing change.
- Extra-curricular activities are enjoyed by students, welcomed by parents and contribute positively to the enrichment of the students' educational experiences.
- Planning at whole-school, grade and subject levels is well integrated and gives coherence to learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop teaching strategies designed to focus on the gender difference in terms of scores, so as to enable boys to make faster progress.
- Ensure that every class sets short-term goals for students to help them understand more clearly what they need to do to move forward.
- Continue to develop teacher peer evaluation, to make good use of the wide range of teaching experiences within the school.
- Develop more consistent collection and recording of data to facilitate the monitoring and review of student progress, particularly in the higher grades.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

There is a very clear sense in Howard Beach School of a team of teachers, parents and students committed to the personal and academic development of every child. It is a school which has a clear vision for its future and that of its students, and this vision is embodied in the principal's aim to develop the school into a true neighborhood school, involving parents even more in the life of the school.

There is also a very pleasing coherence in the planning within the school, so that school goals are apparent to all, but teachers are also very clear as to how their work in their classroom will help attain these goals. The use of data to target students, to differentiate their learning experience and to move them forward, is well embedded at all levels of the school. Parents and students know what the children need to do to progress. If they have concerns, whether academic or personal, the school always responds promptly and positively to such concerns.

Teachers speak of the supportive nature of the administration and their willingness therefore to take risks and try out new strategies. They do so knowing that a lack of immediate success will not be criticized, and help will be provided to make new ideas work. The impact of this is readily apparent; the school's students have made steady progress in test scores over the past four years and they enjoy coming to the school.

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 well developed.

Teachers have a clear understanding of the performance and progress of their students because of their effective use of data, and the steady improvement in test scores over the past four years shows the impact of consistent analysis. With the lower elementary students the focus is on rather 'softer' assessment through observations and conferencing with students, but for those who do not meet developmental benchmarks a wide range of programs are deployed. These include the Wilson program, 'Voyager' and 'Foundations' and allow targeted interventions to prevent students from slipping behind. This data is brought to the weekly grade meetings to provide the focus for discussion and for future planning, and to meetings at all levels which involve the principal and assistant principal, who are able to develop a whole-school perspective with some ease.

Teachers consistently refer to the data and can easily identify the needs and interventions for any particular child. Some first-grade students who are advanced readers have been working for part of their English language arts classes with the second grade, as a direct result of the identification of their more advanced needs. Special education students are placed in their own classes but there is clear evidence of progress being made and the individualized education plans show evidence of students having interventions removed

and in some cases being completely de-certified. English language learners are targeted through cooperative team-teaching classes and the data from the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Tests shows the impact of this teaching.

The monitoring of other groups of special interest is more informal, but boys' progress is not yet effectively targeted. The school has recognized this issue. Steps have been taken to equip the school and class libraries with more appropriate reading materials, but the implementation of a specific range of teaching strategies, designed to enable boys to make faster progress, is still to be developed. The principal has identified several schools as 'sister schools', and networks with these schools to provide comparative data, and shares this with teachers.

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.

Goals are set for the whole school through the Comprehensive Education Plan, but for individual classes and students the grade teams work collaboratively to establish goals by mid-October, using the data from the reading assessments. These goals are measurable and time-related, are reviewed regularly at team meetings and are modified as necessary. The presence of the principal or the assistant principal at all of these meetings ensures that the administration has a clear oversight of what progress is being made at every level within the school. Interventions are made for any student considered 'at risk' and the involvement of counseling or of the pupil personnel team follows from the analysis of data at these meetings. Teachers also identify any student who could clearly be raised from one level to the next, and they provide additional support to achieve this movement. The impact of this is again shown by the steady decrease of level 1 students and an increase in the number of level 3's and 4's.

The support given to students in greatest need is excellent and resources are deployed to ensure that the special education students and the English language learners are able to benefit from reduced class sizes. The impact of this support can be seen in that the 'promotion in doubt' list has reduced from over 60 students in January 2007 to a dozen in May. The school has high expectations of its students, who in turn expect to be challenged in their work. Students are able to articulate their goals for the year, and in many cases are also able to explain what immediate steps they need to take to improve. However this is not true of every class, and the more consistent provision of short-term goals for students to help them understand more clearly what they need to move forward is seen as an area for development. Test scores are analyzed by the cabinet and the coaches, and then passed to teachers for further review and the detailed planning of how to respond to the scores at different levels. In this way the activity of all members of the school community is driven by the regular analysis of the data and the older students are encouraged to share in the goal-setting process through conferences with their teachers.

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.

Curriculum planning integrates the content areas and allows teachers to address different skills through a range of materials. Social studies, for example, is linked closely to the balanced literacy program to target such concepts as cause and effect, similarity and difference. The science curriculum incorporates an investigative approach and links to literacy for the writing of reports. The curriculum is tailored to suit the needs of individual groups, with students working across grades or in an Advanced Regents Placement class to accelerate the students’ progress in mathematics and science. Teachers are allowed flexibility within the pacing calendar to revisit topics when test data indicates this to be necessary.

There is a clear awareness among the teachers as to their accountability for their students’ progress and they are easily able to articulate the different strategies used with various students. Teachers differentiate their teaching in a variety of ways in order to provide appropriate instruction for their students. They use flexible groupings, they provide graduated, scaffolded worksheets to guide writing and they differentiate through the careful use of their own time. This is evident in all classrooms and is clearly part of the daily routines. Resources are effectively deployed to meet the needs of the students and the school’s goals. Data from the Early Childhood Literacy Assessment System led directly to the introduction of the Voyager program and the hiring of two paraprofessionals to deliver the program to groups of five or six students. This rapidly reduced the number of initial referrals of students for possible special education, and data showed the students in the program making good progress.

Students are engaged by the majority of their classes. They particularly enjoy ‘hands on’ projects and ‘figuring things out’ through problem-solving activities, and appreciate the different approaches to teaching and learning that their teachers employ. The relationship between students and adults is excellent and the good level of attendance underlines this. They enjoy coming to school and feel very safe in the school. The principal has a clear system in place to manage attendance and there are rewards for classes and individual students with perfect attendance.

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.

When hiring new teachers, the principal sets greatest store by their potential to work within the collegial framework she is establishing in the school and the quality of their instruction. The setting of high expectations is also a critical factor, and initial professional development focuses on the teacher’s potential to use data for this purpose. Professional development is well aligned to the needs of the school and of the teachers. The teachers are surveyed to determine their individual needs and the administration links these needs with those of the school to provide the most appropriate training. Data is discussed at all grade meetings and this allows teachers to become more sophisticated in their use of the data. The impact of this is judged by the administration through ‘walk-throughs’, work surveys and an analysis of teachers’ own data records. Teachers are able to make

intervisitations to each other's classrooms and the administration facilitates this. Planning of teaching and the candid discussion of observed teaching happens during common preparation periods, but further development of teacher-peer evaluation is required to enhance use of the wide range of teaching experiences within the school.

The principal is respected as an instructional leader and as a person capable of effectively managing change, particularly as the school grows in size over the next two years. She regularly observes teachers and provides positive feedback, with a clear focus on developing the individual teacher's skills for the well being of the school and its students. She encourages teachers to try new ideas and take risks, and this is much appreciated. Systems and procedures are clear, and communications within the school and between school and home are good. Parents particularly appreciate guidance as to how they can support their children's' learning more effectively. Extra-curricular activities, such as the CHAMPS program and the Virtual Y, are enjoyed by students, welcomed by parents and contribute very positively to the enrichment of the students' educational experiences and the development of their self-esteem.

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 well developed.

Planning at whole school and grade and subject levels are well integrated to give coherence to the planning process. There are clear links between the goals for the school as embodied in the Comprehensive Education Plan and the goals set for each grade team. For example, a goal focusing on differentiation is incorporated into the grade plans in terms of the different strategies to be used, and in a class plan which strategies will be used for specific students. This ensures also that the goals for individuals are realistic as they are individually considered at grade and class level. Interim assessments are used both summatively and formatively, with item analysis focusing teaching and leading to the creation of flexible class groupings to address specific issues. This process of monitoring and review is embedded in the school's procedures.

All plans, including the Comprehensive Education Plan are regularly evaluated in terms of progress towards goals. The Comprehensive Education Plan is a working document, which leads the school forward and which is reviewed twice a month. Most teachers are not directly involved with the Comprehensive Education Plan, but all are aware of its major areas of focus, and all have ownership of the grade plans. The effect of this integration of planning is to ensure that the school has a well-evidenced understanding of its strengths and areas for development, and the cabinet knows the areas to be prioritized. For example, the school appropriately recognizes that, as it increases in size with the addition of 7th and 8th grade students, it will be important to ensure the more uniform and consistent collection and recording of data to facilitate the monitoring and review of student progress. At the end of the year, grade teams review their own progress, consider areas of strength and those for development, and this analysis feeds into the planning of the new Comprehensive Education Plan.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Howard Beach School (PS 146)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score			X

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