



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Charles H. Houston School
Elementary/Middle School 332
51 Christopher Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11212**

Principal: Deborah Pierce

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Lead Reviewer: John Hudson

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Charles H. Houston School is an elementary/middle school with 568 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 65% Black, 33% Hispanic and 2% other students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 87%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 94.6% eligibility.

The school shares the building with a suspension center.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Teachers regularly assess student work to maintain a good understanding of what students know and can do and how well they are progressing.
- The principal and her staff visit high achieving schools to identify very effective practices that accelerate student learning.
- Students and teachers collaborate well to understand students' next learning steps and devise effective plans to meet demanding goals.
- The school takes great care to identify students in need of improvement and generate suitable interventions to accelerate their progress.
- Teachers hold themselves accountable for the quality of the learning environment and the progress of their students.
- School leaders target the school's financial and human resources towards identified priorities that raise student achievement.
- An effective professional development program assists teachers and leaders in learning the skills they need to improve student achievement.
- Teachers visit each other's classrooms, share good practices and continuously improve their planning and instruction.
- The principal and her staff consistently implement clear procedures to ensure the school runs smoothly and students learn effectively.
- The principal and her team have established plans and procedures for improving teacher effectiveness and student progress.

What the school needs to improve

- Embed monitoring and refinement processes to ensure all plans, procedures and programs lead to improvement in student outcomes.
- Extend professional development to ensure the very good planning and instructional practices seen in many classrooms are extended to all.
- Reach out even further to involve a small but transient population of parents whose children's academic and personal progress is at risk.
- Share the high expectations for student success with all sections of the school community.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Teachers and leaders make consistently effective use of frequent assessment and regular analysis of achievement data to give them a good understanding of student achievement and progress. They make very good use of recently introduced data management systems to track the progress of individual students and groups of students. Their analysis enables them to dig into data and identify groups of particular interest. Leaders compare the performance of students, classrooms and subjects. They learn from the experience of other schools how they can improve student performance. Students work with teachers to identify what they know and what they need to learn next. Teachers and students use this understanding to establish plans and time frames to master students' next learning goals. However, not all teachers make effective use of their detailed knowledge of student learning to differentiate their instruction and meet the all the needs of learners. Parents receive regular reports of their children's progress and enjoy frequent opportunities for working with teachers to promote student learning. The school works hard to involve everyone in this important process to encourage all students to attend regularly and progress well.

The school provides a broad and engaging curriculum. Teachers feel accountable to the principal, their students and their peers for the quality of their work and the progress of their students. Teachers and leaders work hard to ensure the learning environment is safe and encouraging and that there is mutual trust and respect throughout the building. The principal and her administrators are vigilant to ensure the school continues to improve in a stable environment where change is managed carefully. The school has developed effective procedures to increase student achievement and enable teachers' practices to continue to improve. Leaders and teachers have identified programs that were not working effectively and have made necessary changes. However, this process is not yet embedded in the school's regular practices. The principal has firmly held expectations of students' high achievement.

Since the previous Quality Review, the school has made good progress overall but only some progress towards increasing the involvement of parents. School achievements are improving, teachers are extending their skills and the school has set targets to improve instruction. The inquiry team has used one of the school's data management systems to identify and measure the effectiveness of support for a group of grade 5 and 7 English language learners who are underachieving. The cohort is divided into small groups who meet with their mentors about three times each week and their progress is carefully monitored.

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 the student's progress over time.

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

The principal, who has a very good knowledge of the use of technology to support learning, along with her assistant principals and a data manager encourage all staff to assess and measure student performance regularly and to use technology in support of their work. Teachers use a broad range of means to measure performance. These include conference notes, running records and teacher assessments in addition to commercial data management systems. In consequence, teachers and leaders have a very good understanding of what students know and can do and the increase in their knowledge over time. These systems are used in all grades in English language arts, math and social studies. Professional development enables teachers to learn the data management skills they need to plan their instruction but only a minority demonstrates highly effective planning and instructional skills.

Management systems and effective support from good training and knowledgeable colleagues enable all staff to maintain their good understanding of the performance and progress of groups of students. The progress of distinct groups such as special education students, English language learners, ethnic groups and boys and girls can be tracked with ease. However, the school can also identify other groups of particular interest, including low achieving students and students whose attendance is poor. The school seeks to identify particular learning barriers which inhibit progress for individuals or groups of students. The principal and her colleagues identify and visit high achieving schools whose practice is of interest to them. One such school makes very good use of its extended day to enrich students' learning and accelerate their progress. The Charles Houston School will introduce a similar program in September and is currently planning a professional development program to ensure it runs effectively and student achievement improves.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Students work with their teachers to assess their performance and understand what they can do. One of the data management systems provides rapid feedback to support this work and students enjoy learning in this way. Parents are included in this process and the school provides frequent information on their children's progress and provides workshops so parents can more fully understand these processes. Some parents use passwords to access updated information about their children's achievement online. The school extends high expectations for the achievement of all students but a small minority of parents, some of whom remain in the community for very short periods, are not yet fully involved in their children's education, so not all students have good attendance or progress sufficiently well. With some success, the school has tried a number of ways to draw these parents into the school community.

Teachers and leaders use achievement data and other measures to identify students in need of improvement. This is a very caring school that gives great attention to the needs of students who are not succeeding. The school has developed very good resources to do this, including highly effective guidance and academic intervention services. Other target groups include higher achieving level 2 and 3 students in English language arts and math to lift them to the next levels.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

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

The curriculum is organized so that student performance can be assessed at regular intervals through the school year. English language arts, math, social studies and science programs are organized so that teachers and students can measure what students know and can do, and what they need to learn next, at regular intervals throughout each marking period. In these ways, teachers monitor student progress towards their goals. This information is shared with students and their parents. The curriculum is broad and engaging and includes art, technology and physical education. Music and dance are available to younger students. Teachers and leaders work hard to ensure the learning environment is positive, safe and encouraging. An atmosphere of mutual trust and respect pervades the school. Parents appreciate the friendliness and easy access to staff.

Teachers respond well to the principal’s sensibly measured introduction of change based on very effective preparation and training. Whilst teachers hold themselves accountable for the quality of their instruction, learning environment and the progress of their students, not all teachers make enough use of their detailed knowledge of student learning to differentiate their instruction and meet the needs of learners fully. In classrooms where differentiated lessons are in place students are highly engaged and make very good progress.

School leaders target the school’s financial and human resources towards identified priorities that raise student achievement. Recent budget priorities include improving student achievement, keeping class sizes down and providing technology as an important learning, planning and instructional tool. The school has worked to good effect to maintain current attendance rates in spite of the arrival of transient families in its community. The principal gives much emphasis to the good attendance of many students and classrooms and all staff are proactive in encouraging students to attend school punctually every day.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

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

The professional development program aims to enable the school to achieve strategic goals for raising achievement, meeting the learning needs of students and ensuring that all teachers accelerate their students’ progress. The current program includes training on assessment techniques, use of the school’s data management systems, the

introduction in September of an interdisciplinary core knowledge program in kindergarten and grade 1 classes and a revised after school program. School leaders make very good use of student performance data and frequent walkthrough observations to ensure teacher planning and instruction are effective and students are progressing. Demanding student academic goals, peer pressure, professional development and coaching encourage teachers whose performance may be less than satisfactory to improve their classroom practices.

The school schedule enables teachers to visit each other's classrooms, share effective practice and continuously improve their planning and instruction. The principal strongly encourages this collaboration and teachers are enthusiastic in response. Staff turnover is low, but teachers new to the school report that they enjoy working at a very friendly school and continue to benefit from highly effective induction and support. The school provides good support and guidance that enable students to meet their personal and academic goals. The school runs very smoothly and is referred to as a haven of calm, support and high expectation for its students. The school has developed a good range of partnerships to promote student social and artistic development. Another program teaches younger students to swim.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The principal and her team have established effective procedures for improving student progress. For example, leaders and teachers have recognized that English language arts, social studies and science programs are insufficiently integrated to properly support student learning. The school looked for alternative approaches that address these issues and found a suitable one on which to model improvements after visits to a high achieving school. The school is gradually embedding monitoring and refinement processes to ensure all plans, procedures and programs are fully effective and lead to continually improving student outcomes.

Some good practice is in use and the school has good expectations for planning and instruction to meet the needs of all students but not all teachers make effective use of their detailed knowledge of student learning to differentiate their instruction and to make adjustments to meet all the needs of each learner. The principal is carefully monitoring teacher effectiveness and providing professional development and coaching where this is required.

The respected principal encourages her community to strive towards ambitious personal development and academic goals for all students. She provides the support as well as other resources and is establishing procedures to assist the school towards reaching its targets.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Charles H. Houston School	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
Quality Score			X		

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

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?				X	
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?				X	
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X	

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?			X		
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?			X		
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X		

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?			X		
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.					
To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?				X	
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4					X

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.					
To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?				X	
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?				X	
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?			X		
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 5					X

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped