



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Hernandez - Hughes Learning Academy

Elementary School 030

**144 - 176 East 128 Street
New York
NY 10035**

Principal: Karen Melendez-Hutt

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Lead Reviewer: Liz Robinson

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Hernandez-Hughes Learning Academy is an elementary school with 395 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 6. The school population comprises 63% Black, 34% Hispanic and 1% White students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 91.1%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 73% eligibility.

The school shares the building with a special education school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The visionary leadership of the principal and her team has led to the significant improvement of the school.
- The school is a highly data rich environment and has very well established and effective practices for the analysis and use of student data to inform instruction.
- Highly effective professional development enables teachers to use assessment data to match instruction very closely to the individual needs of students.
- The school has very high expectations of the students, and effectively communicates these with the school community.
- Staff set appropriate and challenging targets for individual students, which are regularly updated, and make the students and parents aware of these.
- Wide access to high quality arts and sports provision ensures that students experience a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Instruction is highly engaging and makes sophisticated use of meta-cognition to make students accountable for their own learning.
- Staff are highly dedicated and professional and have access to an excellent range of development opportunities which means that they deliver a very high quality of instruction.
- Very good provision is planned and delivered to meet student's personal and social needs.
- The school has an extensive range of effective and relevant partnerships with other organizations which enrich the students' experiences.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine whole school development planning by including success criteria linked more explicitly to student assessment data.
- Refine student tracking systems further by including information that enables sharper monitoring of sub-groups in reading and writing.
- Further extend the range of approaches used by the school to engage with parents.

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 well developed.

The staff and administration of the school work in a highly dedicated, collaborative way in order to provide an excellent standard of education to their student population. This results in the students making very good progress. This is achieved through specific analysis of the students' needs and strengths and good planning for differentiated instruction. The cabinet has extremely high expectations of their students, staff and parents, and is highly effective in communicating these. Strategic planning has improved well since the last review. Through continual evaluation of their practice, the administration accurately identifies what is going well and areas in need of development. They use student assessment data to drive all strategic decisions, and their analysis sets the agenda for school improvement. Although the school now uses data to evaluate the progress of groups of students, it does not match plans sufficiently closely with success criteria linked to student progress.

The school has an accurate and constantly updated understanding of the achievement of every student and uses this information in many ways. Data analysis of ethnic groups, gender, English language learners and special education students identifies disparities in achievement. Challenging targets are now set for every student, and these are very clearly communicated to the students and their parents. A wide range of carefully selected assessment tools are used to track students' progress accurately in relation to these goals. This tracking information is collated by the well-established and highly effective inquiry team. The data is then referred on to a range of other teams for scrutiny. The professional development team uses the information to identify areas for improvement for teachers, based on areas where students have achieved less well. The data is also used by the family support team to identify students in particular need of support. Teachers make significant use of this tracking data to appropriately modify instruction and change groupings.

The professional development team has a robust approach, setting measurable and specific improvement targets with teachers. These are followed up effectively with a wide range of support, including lessons modeled by a coach, inter-visitations, conferencing, the teacher resource room and external training. The family support team considers the whole child. Its effective support includes input from a wide range of professionals from health, guidance, attendance, and the parent worker, alongside academic considerations. The school has in place highly effective interventions to support those students most in need, and regularly reviews the impact of this work.

The school has a very clear, well-established understanding of excellent instructional practice. Resources for the broad, balanced curriculum are chosen with very careful consideration to fit in with the pedagogical approach of the school. The use of meta-cognition to hold students accountable for their learning is well embedded, and evident throughout the school. Instruction is contextual, practical and highly engaging.

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 inquiry team is instrumental in collating and analyzing data on student performance. The results of student assessments are collected and analyzed by the team, before being referred on to other teams for a range of purposes. The school has a highly structured, logically linked program of assessments, which provide meaningful data on student performance and progress. The assessments include diagnostic reading assessments (DRA), and the school has now introduced diagnostic writing assessments (DWA) which give highly specific information about student achievement. In addition, the school makes very good use of Acuity data, as well as other achievement predictor tests to inform differentiated instruction.

The "Orchard" software allows teachers to assess students in specific skills, and provides further meaningful information about students' strengths and areas for development. Teachers use running records to make very regular assessments of progress in reading. Teachers use sophisticated spreadsheets to identify student progress against individual skills and use color coding to highlight students who need additional instruction in specific areas. Teachers receive excellent support in using the data to inform their practice which means that they are more effective in meeting the needs of individual students.

The school uses disaggregated data to track the progress of different groups of interest to the school, but does not presently incorporate this with DRA and DWA tracking sheets. As a result, tracking is not yet as sharp as it might be.

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 well developed.

The school has highly effective systems in place to identify those students who are in the greatest need of improvement. These students are brought to the attention of the family support team, who decide on appropriate interventions, including mental health support, extended day provision, extensive academic interventions and support for parents. The team sets specific targets for these students, with timescales for review and success indicators. This results in these students making progress.

Teachers set challenging targets for all students, based on their previous achievement, which represent more than one year's growth. These reflect the high expectations of the school. Teachers keep parents informed of progress towards targets on a frequent basis and are also informed of how they can help. Parents greatly appreciate the level of support offered by the school and find it extremely helpful.

The school provides a comprehensive range of services for parents. However, it is aware of the need to continuously identify ways to engage with parents from this local community to support learning and share information about their children with the school.

The school has had a parent coordinator for many years, who provides an excellent service to the local community.

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 principal has led the school in establishing a rich and engaging curriculum which includes the use of meta-cognition and contextual learning. Very high quality instruction, with specialist teaching in visual art, music, dance and sports, provides students with the opportunity to achieve well in these subjects. One student said, “Everyone has their own talent and we get to show it off!” Meaningful links are made between subjects, which enables students to explore topics from different points of view and develop their understanding. The school has an overall theme for each year, which provides opportunities for investigative and creative work in addition to the core academic program. The principal describes the school as a “living museum”, and this is demonstrated by the deeply valued and exceptionally high standards of work displayed.

The use of challenging questioning, opportunities for practical exploration and a thematic approach make instruction highly engaging. The teachers make excellent use of meta-cognition to evaluate learning and make students responsible for the direction of their own learning. For example, in grade 6 written evaluations ask, “What I did? How I did it? Why I did it?” As a result, students are very aware of the learning process and can clearly articulate their own learning goals and objectives. Teachers put learning into real life contexts and this makes learning meaningful and relevant for the students. Technology is used very effectively to provide differentiated instruction and independent learning.

Teachers are highly skilled in using evaluations of student assessment data to modify their plans for instruction. This is standard practice across the school and means that instruction is clearly differentiated to individual student level. This supports students in making good progress with their learning. Close scrutiny of pupil assessment data across the school means that teachers are highly accountable for the progress of their students. The cabinet uses regular and robust analysis of data to make shrewd decisions about staffing and scheduling, which means that the resources of the school are very well aligned to the needs of the students. The attendance team meets weekly, and has been highly effective in improving student attendance over a number of years. Very positive relationships are evident throughout the school, and the school affirmation strongly supports this.

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.

Professional development is highly valued, very effective and given an extremely high priority in the school. As a result, the quality and scope of professional development for staff, including paraprofessionals, is very good. This is reflected in the very significant financial investment that the principal makes, including paying staff to stay after school to attend “learning academies” around specific curriculum areas. The school has talented

and highly knowledgeable coaches for English language arts, math, science and social studies. The professional development team meets weekly, and uses current student assessment data as a tool to identify areas of concern across the school. Individual teachers' needs are identified through this process, along with formal and informal observations. Specific, effective goals are set with teachers, and the coaches work alongside teachers to both support and monitor their development so that the input they receive is personal to them. Teachers are given extensive opportunity to observe practice both in the building and at other schools.

Students benefit greatly from a large number of partnerships the school has. These provide them with diverse opportunities for learning across the curriculum. For example, a partnership with City Year Program provides volunteers who work in school for a year or more giving small group and individual support, as well as extended day provision. There is also a strong partnership with the special education school in the same building. Students are integrated into mainstream classes, and staff expertise is shared. One student observed that, "the children join together and make people feel comfortable". This way of working contributes to students' citizenship education. The principal is astute in applying for additional grants and funding, and this means that students have access to very high quality resources. The school is part of a collaborative community of practice in the City, and so shares good practice with schools across New York.

The school is very well organized and this provides a calm and structured environment for learning. Staff are extremely aware of their roles and responsibilities and this supports the highly effective management of the school. The school supports the personal development needs of the students very well, with extensive guidance, health and mental health facilities appropriately aligned to students' needs. This means that students behave well and are developing their social and emotional skills.

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 well developed.

The principal articulates a clear and ambitious vision for the school community, articulated through the school affirmation, and is very clear about what has already been achieved as well as what still needs to be done. She has been highly effective in developing procedures and systems which are making the vision a reality for this school, exemplified by the effective staff teams who lead specific aspects of school life. She and her team are rigorous in using assessment data to inform their strategic decision making. Whole school development planning is based on the cabinet's analysis of data. It identifies specific interim goals and timeframes, and is an effective tool in driving the direction of the school. The principal recognizes planning can be further refined by developing success criteria more explicitly linked to student assessment data.

The school evaluates students' progress highly effectively throughout the year, with clearly planned schedules. The inquiry team tracks all students against individually set goals, and highlights any students not making sufficient progress. These students are then referred on to the family support team, or discussions are held with the class teachers which results in plans being developed or revised to support the student. The findings of the team directly impact on the next steps taken to support the student and their family, and new timeframes for review are then set.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Hernandez-Hughes Learning Academy	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 demanding, 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?				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?				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