



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Henry Highland Garnet School

Elementary School 175

**175 West 134 Street
New York
NY 10030**

Principal: Cheryl McClendon

Dates of review: May 12 - 13, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Veronica Yurcik

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Henry Highland Garnet School is an elementary school with 374 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 79% Black, 17% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 91.2%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 76.7% eligibility.

The former principal passed away in November 2007, after a long illness. She had been the principal for more than 18 years. The new principal started work at the school in October 2007 and was appointed officially in March 2008.

A charter school housed on the site has expanded, resulting in decreased space available to the school. This issue presents a difficult challenge for the school to provide adequate instructional space and has prevented the school from creating a planned science lab.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal, ably supported by her cabinet, has generated the respect of teachers, parents and students who view her as a strong presence.
- The principal and supervisory staff enable a high level of shared leadership.
- Teachers view data interpretation as critical to their work in supporting student performance and use assessment data on an ongoing basis.
- Teacher specialists employ a multi-tier approach to intervention by acting on academic, social, emotional and behavioral factors.
- The school is focused on improving student achievement in all content areas and uses a wide range of commercial assessments to tailor student support.
- Teachers take pride in their expertise and are open to learning from each other.
- Coaches, intervention specialists and school teams maintain and share detailed student records with classroom teachers.
- Staff members demonstrate strong feelings of collegiality in their common commitment to their students' well-being and academic success.
- Staff members use technology well to support learning and increase student engagement.

What the school needs to improve

- Reorganize assessment results to create more precise summaries of students' academic needs to enable setting of learner-specific interim goals.
- Help students to better understand and articulate personal academic goals in on-going self-evaluation with their teachers.
- Build on the very positive staff collegiality to share an in-depth study of teaching and learning across the grades to support school-wide interventions.
- Conduct more comparative analyses of student subgroup categories.
- Extend the scope of data investigations of similar, well-performing schools to learn from instructional strategies that increase student performance.

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.

Teachers and parents admirably describe their school as a “family”. This trust has enabled the community to emerge from a period of mourning and readjustment after the recent death of their former principal. They have rallied to support their new principal and appreciate the renewed concentration she brings to improving their school. The school is very dedicated to raising student achievement across all curriculum areas. While exemplary progress is noted for last year, overall performance on levels 3 and 4 continues to be below that of peer and City schools. School staff members are empowered to take on leadership roles. Collaboration and the use of data are well- established key values. A strong commitment to understanding the whole child enhances student progress and community relationships. The school’s work with parents emphasizes a multi-dimensional approach toward student achievement. A strong collegiality fosters frequent meetings among teachers, coaches and support staff to share student data and to support school goals. Teachers respect and rely on each other’s expertise to further their own learning and that of their students.

The school is very thorough in identifying students in academic need and in identifying and monitoring particular program interventions and student strategy groupings. However, the examination of daily teaching practices and individual student goal setting is not given the same priority. Student articulation of goals and ongoing self-evaluation with teacher assistance are not yet fully developed.

The work of the school inquiry team has brought increased attention to instructional practice and goal setting. The team has encouraged more thorough data analysis to identify causal factors that inhibit student achievement. The team’s frequent verbal and written communications and organization of collected information provide good data that teachers use in their planning and instruction. Teachers use technology well to interpret data and provide computer-assisted student intervention, using a wide array of commercial programs.

The school has successfully addressed areas noted for improvement in last year’s Quality Review. They used similar school comparative information and analysis of grade performance to make changes in their social studies instructional programs. They also developed a new tracking tool to study subject and grade performance better for the purpose of raising the consistency of achievement across the grades. In addition, grade teams visited neighboring similar schools to observe classes to reflect on and improve literacy teaching and learning. But the school has not examined similar schools higher progress performance on which it might base revisions for its own improvement.

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 school has well established data collection systems embedded into everyday practice. Teachers, coaches and support specialists constantly share data. The school makes good use of a wide variety of commercial assessments on an ongoing basis in order to track student progress. Specific reporting periods ensure that data is collected and reviewed regularly. The school uses bimonthly student reading level class reports and tri-annual DIBELS literacy skills assessments to track performance and to set goals. In addition, teachers complete math checklists and review daily student reports printed from computer-assisted learning programs. They refer to conferring notes, student work and other assessments. Teachers receive good support in analyzing data at weekly meetings with coaches and with the principal. Teachers make effective use of data to group students. They judiciously cull information from baseline, standardized and periodic assessments and from student work samples to determine which students need greater support or advanced academic work.

The school has not yet conducted analysis regarding its students’ lower progress scores as compared to similar schools but makes effective use of other comparative information. When the school noted that similar schools outperformed them on the State social studies exam this led them to review and revise their social studies instructional program. The principal visited with a similar school principal to study how student data was organized, interpreted and used. She then developed a color-coded spreadsheet to track the longitudinal performance of all grade 3-5 students on standardized exams and periodic assessments throughout the year. All teachers use the spreadsheet versions with different data views (sorted by content area, grade, class) to track student performance. These tracking systems note special education student and English language learner progress, but do not adequately account for differences of performance in ethnic subgroups. The principal keeps a good eye on performance trends and maintains her own data binder to compare student achievement progress throughout the year and across years.

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 places a high value on collaboration. School personnel and teams share a common commitment to raise school-wide achievement and work collaboratively. There are scheduled weekly meetings between coaches and grade teams. In addition, grade teams meet another two to three times weekly. Despite these positive actions the school provides too few opportunities for cross-grade communication to share teaching practice and patterns of student performance, and to identify instructional strategies that support student academic needs school-wide within the regular instructional program. Student personal goal setting is not well established. Although some classes post an individual reading and math goal for each student, when asked, students could not state what those goals are. They are aware of end-of-year reading grade level goals. The school has

acknowledged the need for better communication and goal setting and recently designed a weekend curriculum planning retreat.

School tracking systems effectively identify academic at-risk students. Well functioning teams, such as the academic intervention, pupil personnel, attendance and inquiry teams, skillfully plan next steps and identify staff members who can best provide services to the targeted students. These teams employ a multi-modality approach taking into account work habits, behavior and family concerns. As a result, at-risk students have demonstrated academic and social improvement. Expectations and information are clearly communicated through posted goals, standards of behavior, motivational codes, meeting minutes and newsletters. The school provides parents with a packet describing school beliefs in each content area which clearly delineates high expectations for student learning outcomes, student work and parent participation. One student stated that teachers “always push you to do something you don’t think you can do”. Parents feel that they are respected and welcomed. They admire the school’s approach of stating concerns in terms of what is needed rather than what is negative. This has invited positive parent collaboration and greater student success.

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 school successfully chooses core curriculum programs based on their capacity to support inquiry and to generate specific performance data. For example, the school chose ‘FOSS’ science because it reflects current research on collaborative learning, student discourse and embedded assessment. The school aligns its resources well to support daily instruction and academic intervention needs. Specifically, it supplements its science program and K-3 Reading First programs with additional diverse books to ensure that all students have reading material on their instructional level. The school makes good staffing decisions in choosing dual-role specialists to provide effective instructional support. A technology/data specialist helps teachers identify computer programs to complement learning and intervention and to organize student data for analysis. The school makes successful use of resources, grants and community organizations to provide a well-rounded curriculum that is interesting and supportive of student academic and social emotional health. Some of the programs include a keyboard lab for grades K-3, a technology-based program in which fifth graders communicate with the crew of ocean-going vessel, arts residencies, a physical fitness running club and an inter-generational mentor program. The school has developed effective procedures to promote good attendance and has noted improvement this year.

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.

There is a high degree of support for staff members. Teachers note that the new principal makes her presence felt with frequent observations and ongoing assistance. They describe her as a “teacher at heart” and as a “partner” and express positive energy about what they are learning during school and in after school study groups. The school cabinet

demonstrates good ability to amend programs based on on-going data review. When the analysis of a reading assessment tool indicated that reading levels assessed were unreliable this led the principal to switch to running records assessment and to initiate new professional development to train teachers. School leaders effectively schedule several common preps per week for each grade and plan weekly grade meetings with coaches. New teachers are ably supported and mentored by experienced teachers. A new teacher stated that “you just have to listen,” concurring with fellow teachers that assistance is always there and that everyone is “very helpful.”

The school works proactively to improve student guidance and support services. Recognizing an area of need, the principal hired a full time guidance counselor. The school has an effective partnership with mental health workers from the New York Mission Society who provide students with a forum to talk about issues that are prevalent in their lives. The society also runs an academic and enrichment after school program that is attended by more than two-thirds of the students. School leaders consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly. For example, supervisors split duties and responsibilities to carefully monitor all school activities. The principal also developed a new ladder of discipline that clearly delineates expectations and procedures. As one parent stated, “The school is a well-oiled machine”.

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.

Consistent use of curriculum pacing calendars and benchmark assessments provide information on student progress. The school uses this data to highlight student concerns, to group students and to design independent workstation tasks. Students evidence good use of rubrics evaluating their work across content areas. The school has adopted a “response to intervention” methodology for improving student outcomes and for updating goals. They set diagnosis, planning, implementation, observation and evaluation in place as ongoing school systems.

Although the school regularly checks for progress toward benchmark achievement, consistency in giving students specific feedback and helping students to set individual student interim goals is not well established. Teachers have made effective use of periodic assessments, noting that analysis of answer responses has been helpful in understanding why students make errors. As a result, teachers refocus instruction to meet both group and individual student needs.

School leaders review periodic assessments skillfully, flagging individual students and identifying school-wide performance patterns. As a result, students receive instruction needed during a daily skills period and enrichment activities are provided to higher-achieving students. Teachers and supervisors also use this information at professional development meetings to focus on identified achievement trends.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Henry Highland Garnet 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