



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Horace Harding School

Elementary School 206

61-21 97 Place

Queens

NY 11374

Principal: Nicholas Bologna

Dates of review: June 2 – 4, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Alvin Jeffs

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Horace Harding School is an elementary school with 590 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 24% Black, 27% Hispanic, 27% White, and 22% Asian students. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 -2007 was 93%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 66% eligibility.

The principal and assistant principal are just completing their first year at the school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school is a safe, orderly and attractive environment where students thrive.
- The principal, assistant principal and cabinet have introduced many new ways of working that have contributed to significant student progress.
- All staff show very good knowledge and understanding of the students they teach.
- A good program of professional development has been well differentiated to meet individual staff needs.
- Staff have become proficient at differentiating instruction for class groups on the basis of data and work samples.
- There is very good support for special education students.
- Staff make good use of 'soft data', such as observations and anecdotal information in discussions of individual students.
- The inquiry team has generated a very effective exchange of good classroom practice to support under-achieving students.
- Budget, scheduling and new appointments have been well used to enrich the curriculum.
- Good use has been made of staff skills in modeling the use of technology.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that all pupils and parents are kept regularly updated as new goals are set following classroom conferencing.
- Investigate ways to identify and address the needs of special education students for whom English is a second language.
- Further develop opportunities to share good practice with regard to all aspects of the workshop model and informal writing assessments.
- Identify and implement opportunities for staff to contribute to and give feedback on school initiatives in order to further promote trust and respect.

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.

Over the past year, the new principal and his assistant have introduced a wide range of initiatives related to the use of data within the classroom for grouping and differentiation of instruction. This has contributed to significant student progress. Staff have cooperated well in these developments. Conferencing with students and target setting are comparatively new innovations and staff have developed these to different degrees of proficiency. The school has always had a strong commitment to its students and the teaching is underpinned by high expectations. The school's inquiry team has identified a group of English language learners. Good techniques have been developed and shared, with fourth grade teachers, which focus on the use of instructional vocabulary. As with all initiatives this year, there has been significant progress for many of these students within the field of English language arts.

The school has built well upon the recommendations in the previous Quality Review report. These have formed the basis of their strategic plan for 2007-08: a plan that is well implemented and regularly reviewed. An early morning talented and gifted program provides greater challenge to higher-achieving students, as does the fourth grade technology and social studies program. There has been a considerable development of technology in the school. Smartboards have been introduced, together with mobile laptop carts. These, alongside good professional development have ensured that staff are now confident in their use of technology for research, presentations and publishing. Each teacher systematically monitors the progress of students through assessment binders. This is complemented by their very effective use of 'soft' data, such as classroom observations, learning styles and behavior. Training and classroom observations assist staff in developing more rigorous monitoring of literacy and math skills. There has been a major emphasis on writing and a rubric successfully allows staff to record and share information on a structured basis. The school identifies that work relating to consistency within the assessment of writing is the next stage in this process.

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 a well-rounded picture of all students. The school now uses the results of many periodic and predictive assessments to effectively identify the progress of

individuals, groups and grades. This is well supplemented by classroom observations and structured reading, in addition to writing and math records compiled by teachers who know their students very well. It contributes, in particular, to very good support for students who have individual education plans. The emphasis this year has been on ensuring that students work in the least restrictive environment. This has seen a tenfold decrease in the initial referral of special education students. Investment in phonic support programs and a closer alignment of classroom teachers and academic intervention staff have also contributed to a rise in the number of special education students attaining Level 3 in English language arts. Within the English language learner population, the school is still seeking to identify how far difficulties arise from second language development and how much from special education needs. The very thorough work by the inquiry team is allowing staff to begin to share observations and techniques in this process.

The school is very clear about the progress within each key subgroup. There has been a strong focus on students achieving at Levels 1 and 4 to ensure that they receive the appropriate degree of challenge. A close watch is kept on gender and ethnic subgroups to make sure that patterns that emerge are promptly addressed. There is meticulous monitoring of the year-on-year performance of the school. Thus, the school recognizes that the number of Level 4s has dropped, despite the overall increase in Level 3s and 4s. There are close links with other schools and regular comparisons are made with a local school designated as 'outstanding'. The implementation of assessment folders for math and English language arts means that there are robust processes for modifying planning and instruction on the basis of the latest assessments.

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.

Everyone at this school has the highest expectations for students. This is evident in the classroom teaching, where challenging targets are set. It is also clear from the way in which staff confer, informally and in structured meetings, to identify the best way forward for individual students experiencing difficulties and for groups that are identified as under-achievers. Staff collaborate well, particularly in grade meetings, to identify ways in which curriculum tasks can be modified. They discuss ways in which classroom practice can be enhanced to provide challenges to key groups, such as Level 3's who are potential Level 4's. The meetings also consider ways in which to improve the progress of students who achieve Level 1. Target setting has developed well over the past year. However, goals are framed with varying degrees of detail. The school identifies the continuing need to share good practice in this area. Students confirm that they have regular discussions with their teachers and always know where they go next in their learning although they may not always know their long-term goal. Parents have access to student work and are clear about the achievements of their children although are not always clear about student goals.

The identification of individual students who need additional support is rigorous and meetings of the pupil personnel team use data, to try to get to the root of learning difficulties experienced by under-achieving students. Class teachers now have an increased responsibility for special education students. Their ability to identify learning needs and to formulate targets has significantly improved over the current academic year. The fact that staff know their students so well means that all discussions of individual

students are informed, detailed and focused on individual progress. Strategic goals are shared with staff during lesson observations and faculty meetings. The role of coach and grade leader has developed well and is a good bridge between the principal and faculty.

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 effectively aligns resources and curriculum to strategic goals. The introduction of the Teachers College Workshop model provides a structure for lessons that makes learning goals more explicit. Higher achieving students now have good before- and after-school programs. The work of special education and academic intervention staff has been better aligned to general education classrooms. There is a strong combination of self-contained, cooperative team teaching and 'push in' support. This means that all students receive a curriculum that matches their needs. There is a close match between the curriculum, assessment points and the New York Standards. The academic curriculum is enriched by clubs, such as global warming and recycling. There have been trips to 'Hairspray' and the Mets. School-wide activities include field days and a very well received dance festival. There are classes on ballroom dancing, art and violin with visits from authors.

Teachers are held accountable through observations and walkthroughs that focus on strategic targets such as the development of writing. The trust within the school has allowed staff to meet many new challenges. However, the intensity of change has demanded a lot from teachers. The administration envisages a staff survey to assess the impact on staff and this is a sensible move to ensure that the climate of trust continues.

The principal manages resources well to provide for many new developments. This has helped the alignment of teaching to a broader and richer curriculum. Many new books have been purchased to back up the reading curriculum and good investment has been made in technology. The appointment of an assistant principal has had significant impact on the speed of change. Effective scheduling means that teachers have common preparation times, which allow grade meetings to take place regularly. Staff have time to look at the data they are being asked to use. There are stringent processes, including automated phone calls and home visits that have contributed to the rise in attendance.

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.

Rigorous observations of teaching reinforce and support the goals for the school. There has been a strong concentration on the learning environment and the introduction of the workshop model. This has had positive results that are evident in all classes, by, for example, the effective development of the mini-lesson. Classrooms and hallways are attractive environments that support learning and celebrate progress. A good professional program successfully provides training for new and longer-tenured staff. New staff are well inducted into the school by a strong body of experienced and

perceptive staff. The roles of coaches and grade leaders have been clarified and the skills of all staff utilized to the full. There has been good modeling of lessons and techniques such as the introduction of Smartboards and presentation of software. There are increasing opportunities for intervisitations. These allow the good sharing of practices relating to behavior management. There is still work to do on the central and final elements of the workshop model and the standardizing of informal writing assessments.

The school is well run and there are consistent procedures for movement around the school and behavior within class. Additional services, such as psychological support and counseling, are well employed to support students' personal needs. Speech support is of a particularly high standard. Partnerships with Arts Horizons, the Learning through an Expanded Arts Program (LEAP) and Parents as Arts Partners are just three instances of many links that significantly enrich the school's curriculum.

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.

This is the first year of the new administration. It is already clear that robust procedures are in place to identify strategic targets, develop a clear and purposeful plan and review the progress towards those targets. The planning for student outcomes is assisted by the analysis and distribution of current data. Grade teams and individual teachers can see where more work needs to be done and how far they are towards the goal of reducing the number of students achieving at Level 1 in English language arts, for example. The professional development of teachers is mapped out for the forthcoming year and in some areas, such as the perfecting of the workshop model, for the next two years. There are review points during the year to assess how far the new initiatives have reached. Thus, the emphasis on the classroom environment was reduced during the year to ensure that staff were not over-burdened. The instructional cabinet is central to this process, being able to feed back the practical implications of each initiative.

Formal strategic planning starts early in the calendar year with a view to producing a draft plan by the summer. This is scrutinized by the school leadership team, including seven parent members, and modifications made accordingly. This process has been particularly useful in modifying the plans for departmentalizing grade 5 in 2008-09. The final plan for the academic year is shared with staff at a faculty conference. The main goals, which include improving the learning environment, the workshop model and the writing process, are then incorporated into the criteria used for observations, walkthroughs and grade meetings. There are quarterly review points at which all initiatives are reviewed and goals amended as appropriate.

The school has progressed a long way in the past twelve months. Practices now meet the many State requirements, as well as providing a rich and stimulating environment for students. There is a common vision of securing the highest standards, academic and behavioral. The strong combination of a skilled and cooperative staff, together with an energetic and insightful leadership means that the vision is becoming reality.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Horace Harding 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