



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Abram Stevens Hewitt School

Elementary School 130

**750 Prospect Avenue
Bronx
NY 10455**

Principal: Lourdes Velasquez

Dates of review: February 25 - 27, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Ronnie Solow

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Abram Stevens Hewitt School is an elementary school with 664 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 29% Black, and 70% Hispanic. The student body includes 26% English language learners and 15% 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 89%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 97% eligibility.

This is the principal's first year as the leader of this school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is an effective educator, manager and agent for positive change.
- The staff and administration work in collaborative teams to set challenging goals for student learning.
- Continuous monitoring of student progress, with interim adjustments, contributes to increasing academic outcomes.
- Student performance is measured using varied multiple assessments in order to accelerate progress and determine the need for support services.
- Uniformity of curriculum, differentiated learning activities, and positive behavioral expectations are well promoted in the classrooms.
- Rules, regulations and routines, well known and followed by students and staff, enable the school to operate very smoothly.
- Data about performance and progress of students, including a variety of sub groups of students, is gathered and generated effectively.
- Effective comparisons with other dual-language schools contributes to the sharing of best practices.
- Technology and the arts enhance the academic program and motivate students to succeed.
- Extensive partnerships provide excellent support for the academic, social and personal development of the students.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend the use of conferencing sessions to all subject areas in order to establish individual student goals and expand staff accountability.
- Translate the parent handbook into Spanish to consistently provide accurate information to all constituencies.
- Share all interim and predictive testing results with parents to inform them of their children's goals, progress and performance.
- Develop an alternative to formal observation options for skilled senior staff in order to build the capacity of senior staff to take on leadership responsibility in the school.
- Expand the induction program to address the specific needs of inexperienced staff members.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

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

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

The principal, just completing her first year, moved the academic development program to focus on student progress through a collaborative, team-based approach. Teachers discuss the implications of data at weekly grade team meetings and professional development sessions. This information drives the planning of challenging, engaging lessons for flexible, needs-based instructional groups.

The dual-language Spanish program enables English language learners to gain proficiency in English while progressing educationally in their native Spanish. Materials are plentiful in English and Spanish to meet the needs of all students. The administration is making extensive efforts to translate all information and provide translators for meetings. The parent handbook is not yet translated into Spanish and limits the school's ability to consistently share information with all parents. The principal also recognizes the need to share all interim and predictive testing information with parents to keep them well informed of their children's academic progress and the high expectations the school has for the students.

The professional development program, based on data analysis, is extensive and varied. The staff takes advantage of the many opportunities for growth and development both within and outside of the school. At this time, there is no alternative to the formal observation option for skilled senior staff in order to enable them to take on leadership responsibilities. Additionally, the new teacher induction program is not broad enough address the specific issues faced by inexperienced staff.

Print-rich classrooms provide challenging, engaging activities for the students. Best practices are seen through balanced literacy, flexible needs-based groups, conferencing sessions and other aspects of the workshop model in English language arts and math. The administration plans to extend conferencing sessions and student goal-setting activities to other core curriculum areas in order to increase student and staff accountability. The inquiry team is studying 18 bilingual students performing below English language arts grade level expectations in order to monitor and revise the intervention program.

The school has made very good progress in addressing the needs identified in the previous Quality Review. Planning cycles with measurable goals are evident throughout the school, utilizing assessment binders. The balanced literacy program addresses writing skills and higher order thinking across the curriculum. Observations, intervisitations, demonstration lessons and modeling enable the staff to reflect on and adopt best educational practices. Consistent use of data, regularly provided to staff in user-friendly formats, drives the educational program and results in improved outcomes.

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 and her expanded cabinet use a variety of assessment data to understand the progress of every student, class and grade across the school. Detailed analyses of data from a variety of assessments and reports provide an ongoing picture of each student and class across the school. Data analysis by gender, ethnicity, special education students and English language learners provides an accurate assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of every student for teachers to use in lesson planning. The data serves as the basis for forming flexible, need-based instructional groups that effectively address student weaknesses and strengths. English language learners in mainstream classes receive targeted instruction, based on the analysis of their data, in pullout and push-in models of instruction.

Data, examined and discussed at weekly grade team meetings in order to improve student learning, is regularly provided in user-friendly formats, and assists the staff with their analysis of and use of the data. Professional development activities target the use and analysis of the data so that classroom lessons and interventions effectively address student needs.

The principal makes well-informed and accurate comparisons with schools in her peer horizon and within her learning support network, as well as other dual language schools. Intervisitations, by teams of teachers, with other dual-language schools, further extends the sharing of best practices and intelligently informs the decision making process at the school.

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.

Collaborative team sessions assist the principal with goal setting and school improvement planning through the analysis of school-wide data. Grade team meetings, chaired by elected grade leaders, assist teachers with sharing and developing appropriate, challenging and engaging activities and materials for their classes. School-based academic coaches, along with literacy and consultant math staff developers, collaborate with teachers to create well-planned lessons aligned to the curriculum maps and pacing calendars. Students identified as being in greatest need of improvement receive intervention services during and after school, as well as in the Saturday academy. Students not achieving their goals are referred for further intervention and the development of a well-designed pupil intervention plan. This scaffolded approach to intervention is generally successful and often eliminates the need for special education referral.

Parents receive information in English and Spanish through formal and informal sources. The parent coordinator provides a variety of workshops to keep parents informed. The principal plans to translate the parent handbook into Spanish in order to share information about the school and academic goals consistently. Additionally, interim testing information from the Department of Education and the predictive tests are not shared consistently with

parents. The principal has a well-known open-door policy that encourages informal interchanges between parents and the school. Notes, telephone calls, school celebratory events, and conversations at drop-off and dismissal times are other effective avenues for the good exchange of information.

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 follows the City curriculum using balanced literacy for English language arts and Everyday Mathematics for math. Science and social studies follow the State guidelines. Classes across the core curriculum employ the workshop model with flexible instructional groups, and teachers skillfully include differentiated learning activities based on the analysis of class data. Art, dance, technology and physical education classes provide additional opportunities for creativity and self-development and serve as excellent motivation for the students.

Teacher responsibility for accelerating learning, presented as a number of “non-negotiables”, and shared at the opening school conference, drives accountability. Teachers discuss the data for their class with the principal or assistant principal, grade team members and other staff to better understand the needs of their students. Data analysis reveals trends and ensuing actions result in effective revisions to materials and teaching strategies in order to be actively responsive to student learning needs. Teachers and students communicate effectively through conferencing sessions to set goals and discuss progress. Students articulate their reading and math levels and personal academic needs. They are active participants in determining their own education process. The principal judges that now is the time to extend conferencing sessions to the other areas of the core curriculum to expand accountability for both teachers and students.

Budget, staffing and scheduling decisions support student needs as revealed through data analysis. The principal hired an English as a second language teacher, a character educator, an art teacher, literacy and math consultants to further the school goals and early diagnostic data indicates positive learning outcomes. In order to make more efficient use of the budget, the academic intervention services program was carefully redesigned and grade leaders returned to full-time classroom teaching positions to provide increased student services. A school-supported teacher center serves as a site for meeting and receiving high quality collegial support in strategic and lesson planning, professional development and materials selection, in order to improve student learning outcomes. Attendance for 2006-2007 at 89% indicated the need for more stringent attendance improvement procedures. A school-designed attendance reward and incentive program, called star bucks, is focusing on character development and high expectations for all students, and especially attendance improvement. The attendance figures for this year are currently at 91.3% indicating an upward trend that is satisfactory.

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.

A school survey highlighted the staff’s self-identified needs in the area of professional development. These defined needs serve as the basis for workshops during scheduled

City professional development days and other times. Literacy and math consultants, along with school-based coaches and mentor teachers, provide grade and topic-specific professional development through lesson modeling, focused lesson observations with reflective debriefing sessions and strategy training. A differentiated approach to professional development addresses individual needs according to skill, need and interest. Yet, there is no alternate to the formal observation option for the most skilled, senior staff to contribute to the development of their leadership capacity. New and inexperienced staff profit from their collegial relationships with buddy teachers, mentors, grade leaders and coaches, yet addressing issues that are specific to their needs is not conducted in a formalized manner. The administrative team regularly observes teachers, both formally and informally, to assess progress and provide constructive, timely feedback. Walkthroughs, scheduled classroom intervisitations and inter-school visitations, along with common planning time contribute to the high quality professional development program.

Effective youth development and behavior enhancing structures contribute to the orderly operation and calm school environment. Staff members, such as guidance counselors and the character educator, effectively address student needs. The recently elected school president is now developing the avenue for the selection of the additional members of the student government. Relationships with outside partners provide strategic resources and enhancement of academic, social and emotional well-being of the students.

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's goals and objectives, the school-wide action plans and the curriculum maps contain targeted measurable targets that are stringently reviewed on a regular schedule. Formal and informal assessment data, analyzed by the principal and data specialist, highlight areas that require re-evaluation. This information is then shared with the staff. Teachers immediately begin reformulation of their plans to address the needs of their students and realign instructional activities to the targeted skills areas.

Student goals are examined three times per year across the school. Ongoing careful examination of class work and writing samples, along with formal and informal test data, enable the staff to make reflective determinations about next steps and the reconfiguration of classroom and support instructional groups. Outcomes from periodic and predictive assessments assist the staff in gauging the effectiveness of the current academic approach. Teachers make timely revisions in response to identified needs. As stated by the principal, "The Quality Review is not the end. It is the beginning of the cycle that lets us use spiraled strategies to evaluate our own effectiveness." In addition to providing a high quality academic program, the principal, staff and parents envision a school where all students are successful and happy citizens.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Abram Stevens Hewitt 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