

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

Agnes Y Humphrey School for Leadership

Elementary–High School 27

**27 Huntington Street
Brooklyn
NY 11231**

Principal: Sara Belcher-Barnes

Dates of review: October 21 - 22, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Frank Knowles

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Agnes Y Humphreys is an elementary-high school with 549 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 11. The school population comprises 48% Black, 48% Hispanic, 3% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 31% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 88.7%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 97% eligibility. It is in the process of becoming a pre-kindergarten to grade 12 school, and its first high school students will graduate in 2010. It is a fully inclusive school and all classes follow the collaborative team teaching model.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The school has a clear vision to provide a high-quality education for the Red Hook area of Brooklyn by building an inclusive school that serves all age groups. It has recently hired many new teachers as the school has grown and has successfully created a team of staff that is fully committed to that vision. Collaborative team teaching and many opportunities for grade teams to work together have created a staff with a high degree of professional trust in each other. Good relationships with the school's leaders help secure the school's continued development. The school's interdisciplinary approach to learning provides a challenging and motivating curriculum. Students value the support and individual help they receive from their teachers, and enjoy the variety of learning activities this approach brings. Teachers use assessment data well to understand students' achievements and provide differentiated instruction to meet their learning needs. In some subjects, the school has a clear view of the progress made by different groups of students and the grade as a whole, but this does not yet extend to all subjects in all grades. Student goals in some subjects are highly individual and motivate students well. The involvement of students in creating and reviewing these goals is not consistent across all subjects and grades, however.

The school makes very good use of external partners, particularly Good Shepherd Services, to support its students and their families. Parents value the support they receive from the school, although this does not always extend to an understanding of the high expectations the school has of its students. These high expectations are known well by staff. They stem from the school's vision and from effective professional development that focuses on providing teachers with the necessary skills to work in a collaborative and inclusive school. Regular review of assessment data keeps a check on individual students' progress, although the school has not yet put in place a full range of progress measures to take a management-level view of the school's performance and the progress of different groups. The school is highly reflective and understands its strengths and areas for development well. Its plans, however, lack the timeframes and interim goals that would allow the school to be more systematic in its review processes.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Teachers use assessment data well to track the achievement and progress of individual students and to plan learning that is based on students' identified needs.
- The use of learning targets in every lesson and the extensive use differentiated activities ensures that students engage in classroom activities at a level that challenges them to achieve highly.
- The school's interdisciplinary approach to learning provides a broad and balanced curriculum that is aligned well to State standards.
- Extensive links with other partners in the community effectively support student learning and personal development, and those with educational partners support school improvement well.
- The school's program of professional development contains a good balance of activities that effectively support the school's priorities and respond to the needs of individual teachers.
- The principal's clear, coherent vision for the school is shared by staff and provides a strong platform for the school's development through good collaborative working in grade and other staff teams.

What the school needs to improve

- Involve students more consistently in setting and reviewing individual goals in all core subjects, making use of the best practices that already exist in the school in English language arts.
- Devise measures of student progress that supplement data from external tests and provide management-level information to understand better the progress of different groups in the school.
- Continue with the work already undertaken to raise the expectations of parents and caregivers of the education provided for their children and increase their involvement in it.
- Ensure that school-wide planning contains the interim goals and timeframes necessary to allow their systematic review and modification at regular points through the year.

Part 3: Main Findings

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Teachers have a good understanding of the achievement and progress of their students. They keep well-organized binders containing detailed records that enable the school to keep track of student progress. Teachers use this data to understand the detailed learning needs of individual students. Many teachers use diagnostic assessments very early in the school year to ensure that they do this as quickly as possible. In elementary and middle grades, the school supplements State tests with its own assessments. In reading, for example, it uses Fountas and Pinnell resources to measure achievement and student growth as the year moves on. The use of early childhood math assessment has begun to replicate this approach in math. The school's interdisciplinary approach to the curriculum means that teachers keep track of student progress in science and social studies in these grades. In the high school grades, assessment is appropriately more focused on progress towards Regents examinations.

The recent appointment of a data specialist has led to plans to extend the use of technology to record and analyze assessment data of all subjects, replacing the paper systems currently in place in some. The school has found few patterns of achievement among different groups of students. Some variations from year to year partly result from the small cohort in each grade, for example. It has begun to measure student progress in ways that give finer measurements than those provided by the analysis of external tests. For example, it has begun using changes in scale scores in State tests as well as changes in assessment level because, with a high percentage of special education students, growth in learning within a level is not always recognized. This approach to recording and analyzing student progress does not yet extend to all subjects.

The school has recently placed much more emphasis on obtaining an overview of the students' achievement and progress through discussions about data in the cabinet to support the school's development. Additionally, instructional coordinators and assistant principals regularly discuss assessment data with their grade teams to identify areas of strength that can be celebrated and shared among staff and where students and classes need additional support. Students have weekly conferences within "crew" time to discuss their progress and what they need to do to improve, and parents are kept well informed about their children's achievement and progress.

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

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

Every lesson has a clear learning target, often obtained directly from data analysis, to set out short-term goals for learning. This is effective in motivating students and enabling them to see how they are making progress in learning. Students also have a range of goals in the main core subjects of English language arts, math, science and social studies. In some classes, for example in English language arts, these goals are set in a way that fully involves students. Students conference with their teachers, jointly determining the goal and actions needed to achieve it, write their own goals and actions, and review progress towards the goal in the next conference. This exemplary process has not yet extended to all subjects and, recognizing the variation in recording needed for students of different ages, to all grades.

The use of learning targets and goals reflects the school’s strong focus on high achievement that has been communicated well to staff and many students. One student, for example, said that, “The school wants us to be lifelong learners”. Parents value the support the school provides for their children, but the school’s tireless promotion of high achievement and the value of education to the community in Red Hook is an ongoing challenge. As part of the school’s work in this area, the school’s curriculum nights give parents helpful information about the work their children will do in the coming year.

The construction of the school’s upcoming Comprehensive Educational Plan has involved a small team of staff and is ongoing. Existing plans for development are well focused and result from secure analysis of data. Individual staff have clear, well thought out professional development plans, used almost weekly to review progress towards their goals. As a result, there is a good culture of time-limited actions to bring about improvement throughout the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The wealth of data held by teachers is used well to plan instruction to meet students’ needs. The use of collaborative team teaching strategies throughout the school gives the added advantage of frequent discussion through the lenses of two teachers, which often brings an even more detailed analysis of a specific area of work and well differentiated lessons. For example, in a grade 10 social studies class, different groups used texts at different levels and with varied teacher support to achieve the same outcome. In a reading session in grade 3, the teachers were able to conference with students to support the achievement of their individual reading goals.

The school’s Expeditionary Learning approach has led to very creative curriculum maps that both derive from the State standards and reflect the use of interdisciplinary

approaches to enable students to reach them. The use of repeated themes from year to year allows for refinement and development to ensure high levels of motivation and student engagement, without overburdening teachers with planning afresh. Using more specialist teachers as students move through the grades, the school provides a broad, balanced and challenging curriculum for all its students. The curriculum stems from the school's vision and the school's leaders have been very careful to ensure good resources and staffing are available, despite the difficulties that arise from the inadequacies of the school's very old building.

A difficult year with a small number of students who did not subscribe to the school's expectations of behavior was reflected in the results of the school's 2007 – 2008 Learning Environment Survey. Parents recognize the positive changes that have taken place this year, and more generally over several years, although behavior is still an issue where they would like to see further improvement. Teachers' views of the school do not reflect the survey's findings. Currently, they speak of a warm and purposeful climate and considerable collaborative working involving all staff. Relationships with members of the cabinet are good, with staff valuing the support they receive, especially those who have recently joined the school. They model positive behavior well in their professional relationships with students. As a result, students feel safe and secure in school, and work together well in a respectful climate for learning in which they trust their teachers. Several students of different ages valued the small size of their school, grade and class.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.

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

The school's team-teaching arrangements have resulted in considerable collaborative work between pairs of classroom teachers. Professional development on the range of collaborative approaches that can be used has supported staff well in identifying the most appropriate model to use in different circumstances and in planning jointly to make best use of teachers' strengths. This collaboration goes far beyond team-teaching pairs, however, and extends to grade and other teams. Modeling particular styles of instruction for other teachers, peer observation and extensive discussion all contribute to a climate of shared development. The four inquiry teams for the different units of the school have brought about improved outcomes for the target groups of student, and the teams have recently been re-constituted for the new academic year to take this work forward.

Teachers' personal plans contribute well to the school's strong focus on professional development. The balance the school has achieved between supporting the development of school priorities and meeting the individual needs of teachers is good. At its heart is a process of continual improvement, underpinned by weekly meetings with supervisors or coaches, to review each teacher's practices. These discussions make good use of data that relates to student outcomes. They also make good use of information derived from formal and informal lesson observations by assistant principals and others. These are valued by staff for the helpful feedback they provide.

The school has a range of partnerships with other organizations that support it well. Good Shepherd Services is fully integrated with the school, with its school director

serving in the school's cabinet. This close working partnership is a strength of the school and provides a wide range of support to students and their parents. The school also works closely with other support services to provide specialist services to support students effectively. Partnerships with Expeditionary Learning Schools Outward Bound and the New Visions support organization benefit teachers directly in their professional development.

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

This area of the school's work is proficient.

This is a highly reflective school. Individual teachers work effectively with their professional partners to review the learning of the students in their classes, and grade teams broaden this review to matters that affect the whole grade. Instructional coordinators meet weekly with teachers in their grades to review assessment data, and provide guidance and support where needed. In all these discussions, the aim is constant improvement.

The principal's clear vision for the school drives that reflection, and continued improvement and evaluating the effectiveness of the actions taken are at the heart of the school's self-evaluation. As well as the contribution made by grade and other teams, the school's cabinet plays a major part in the review process for the whole school. For example, major decisions to use particular math and science programs have been made because previous programs have proved ineffective in raising achievement. Ongoing reflection by the cabinet has provided an accurate view of the school, and the school's self-evaluation form identifies a set of clear priorities for school-wide development over the coming year. The school has also invested in survey software to provide an alternative view of the school's learning environment, though it is too soon to evaluate the results.

The creation of a school for all grades from pre-kindergarten to grade 12 fits well within the school's longer-term vision to improve education in the Red Hook community. Faculty subscribe fully to this vision and contribute to its realization with enthusiasm. The school's annual review processes are secure. However, the school's action plans do not yet include timeframes and interim goals that would allow the school to make systematic and regular checks on progress and take remedial action where it was needed.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Agnes Y Humphrey School of Leadership	△	▶	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	△	▶	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?			X	
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?			X	
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?			X	
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?			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 student’s learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	△	▶	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?			X	
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			X	
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?			X	
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYO, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.							
<i>To what extent do ...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?				X			
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?			X				
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?				X			
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X			
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?				X			
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?				X			
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?				X			
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X			
Overall score for Quality Statement 4				X			
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent do...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?			X				
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?			X				
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?			X				
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?				X			
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X			
Quality Review Scoring Key							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed