

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

The Langston Hughes School

Elementary School 233

**9301 Avenue B
Brooklyn
NY 11236**

Principal: Denean Stephens-Spellman

Dates of review: October 28 - 29, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Dr. Salvador A. Fernandez

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Langston Hughes is an elementary school with 717 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 94% Black, 5% Hispanic, 0.1% White, and 0.7% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 95.0%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 72% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The Langston Hughes School has developed an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect that contributes to a positive learning environment for students and teachers. The principal's vision for the school contributed to the development of a climate that promotes learning. During the review, parents commented that, "The principal has made a significant change in our school." The teachers also echoed this statement. The parents, students and teachers receive the Langston Hughes Constitution, which clearly delineates the expectations for the entire school community. These are evident in the vibrant and stimulating print-rich classrooms filled with students' work and hallway bulletin board displays that celebrate students' achievement.

Rubrics are posted in every classroom for English language arts, math, science and social studies to provide clear expectations of tasks. Students have a clear understanding of how to use and develop rubrics for self-assessment. As one student stated, "We have a rubric for everything in order for us to know how to achieve our goal." Teachers have started working with students on how to set annual goals. Students have a good understanding of their starting point and end point. However, the school does not have a structure to support teachers in setting goals that include formalized interim benchmarks so that they can strategically monitor and evaluate students' progress in a timely manner to see if they are meeting learning outcomes.

Teachers work collaboratively during weekly meetings to assess students' needs and plan lessons that will improve student outcomes. Last year the school leaders and inquiry team made a major push for teachers to use data binders to keep all summative and formative assessments for their students. Teachers acknowledge that the data binder is a helpful tool to use when discussing students' strengths, weaknesses, and the next learning steps required with students and their parents. Because teachers have embedded the use of the data binder in their practice, they have a good understanding of how to analyze and interpret formative and summative data to plan lessons that are reflective of their students' needs in English language arts, math and writing. However, teachers do not yet use this data effectively enough to plan differentiated lessons that will challenge and engage students in order for them to meet or exceed learning outcomes.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a clear long-term vision for the school that is communicated well to the entire school community.
- The school has an effective system for analyzing, interpreting and recording formative and summative assessment data for grouping students in English language arts, math, social studies and science.
- There is a strong sense of trust and respect among teachers and students that promotes a positive learning environment.
- Teachers collaborate during weekly meetings to assess students' needs and plan lessons to improve students' outcomes.
- The school has an effective system to communicate with families about what is expected of students in core subjects.
- Students have an excellent understanding of how to use rubrics for self assessment.

What the school needs to improve

- Engineer a continuous tiered professional development plan that will provide teachers with strategies on engaging learning and differentiated approaches to promote students' learning and improve student outcomes.
- Build on the existing structure to support teachers in developing goals that include formalized interim benchmarks that will strategically monitor and evaluate student's progress to ensure the achievement of learning goals.
- Further develop teachers' ability to plan differentiated lessons that will engage and challenge students to meet or exceed learning goals.
- Develop specific interdisciplinary links between core subjects to engage students in making connections to reinforce their learning.

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.

The school leaders and teachers have developed a consistent and effective system for analyzing and interpreting formative and summative data for English language arts, math, science and social studies. The school successfully uses different forms of formative assessments to evaluate students. The school conducts literacy assessments, ongoing conferences with students, running records, unit tests in core subjects, teacher-made assessment, projects and Acuity to assess students' periodically during the school year. The use of the data binder has become an embedded practice for teachers to keep all relevant information of students' formative and summative assessments. Teachers are then able to develop a student profile which highlights strengths and weaknesses. Teachers then use this information to plan lessons, develop groups based on skill needs, revise units of study and set annual goals with students. The school leaders, teachers and inquiry team also looked at the different subgroups. All other subgroups were performing similarly and are serviced either by a push-in or pull-out model. Further analyses of the data enable the inquiry team to notice that girls were performing better than boys. Boys are provided with the opportunity to attend extended day programs for remediation. All students can attend extended day for enrichment.

The school leaders and teachers have developed an effective communication system to keep parents informed of students' learning needs and next steps. They send home letters informing parents of what is expected in each unit of study in English language arts, math, science and social studies. Also, progress reports are sent home quarterly to show parents how their child is performing academically and socially in class and what they can do to help at home. Attendance is carefully monitored. Parents are invited to monthly assemblies that celebrate students with perfect attendance. Monthly parent meetings are held where learning needs and tips on how parents can help their child achieve are discussed. Parents are extremely pleased with how accessible the teachers and administration are in addressing their concerns.

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.

After administering reading and writing assessments and a mathematics diagnostic test in September, teachers begin to set annual goals with students. The students are provided with goal sheets to track progress towards meeting goals. Teachers hold

conferences with students to go over their independent reading level. Students then set annual goals. Students have a good understanding of their achievement levels and are able to articulate their learning goal for English language arts, writing, and math, but are not able to explain how they are going to meet their goals. The school has a structure for students to set goals. However, the school does not have a support system for teachers to understand how to set effective goals that include interim benchmarks that will help teachers to strategically monitor and evaluate progress and allow students' to track progress to ensure they meet desired goals.

School leaders involve parents and teachers at several stages during the development of school-wide goals for school improvement. The learning support team meets weekly to analyze formative and summative assessments to identify trends and patterns in order to develop goals for meeting the needs of students. School leadership meets every two weeks. Members are informed of any concerns that were revealed from analyzing the data, such as a decrease in English language arts progress for students in Levels 3 and 4. It was jointly decided that it was necessary to identify those students and provide them with additional enrichment during the extended day. The Langston's Letter is sent home eight times a year to keep parents informed as to how they can help at home. Teachers also send letters home describing what is expected of students in the unit of study in English language arts, math, science and social studies. Parents are pleased with the current system. Parents expressed that, "teachers keep them informed of their child's progress and are always accessible", via weekly letters, monthly progress reports emails and telephone calls.

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.

There is a strong sense of teachers working collaboratively in the development and revision of curriculum within each grade and school wide. All curricula are aligned with State standards. Teachers met and incorporated the best practices from America's Choice, Making Meaning and Teacher's College to strengthen their reader's and writer's workshop model in English language arts and have taken ownership for developing curriculum maps for each grade. Teachers have common planning time by grade, which enables them to plan together to reinforce classroom instruction. The school does not yet have specific interdisciplinary links between core subjects to engage students in making connections to reinforce their learning. The school leaders have provided a structure in which teachers can develop a professional learning community, coming together and discussing best practices and making revisions to the curriculum as needed. Teachers also use this time to discuss different strategies and ways by which they can differentiate lessons in order to engage students in learning. Everyday Math divides each lesson into three sections, which address the needs of the various achievement levels in a class. On a daily basis, the teachers follow the Scope and Sequence for science and social studies. Teachers assess students in these subjects by the use of unit tests, teacher-made assessments and projects. The school has worked on developing teachers' ability to plan differentiated lessons. However, the school recognizes the need to further develop teachers' ability to plan challenging and

engaging differentiated lessons to meet the needs of all students to improve student outcomes.

The school resources have been used wisely to support teaching and learning, for example by providing teachers with support from an English language arts and math coach. Also, the school provides art, music and physical education instruction to students at least once a week and employs a SAFE room teacher to alleviate challenging behaviors that will impede other students from learning. There is a strong sense of respect and trust among adults and students that has created a positive learning environment. Students feel that their teachers “make learning fun” and are always there to “help them” with social or academic needs.

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 proficient.

The administration uses formal and informal observations as its main vehicle to assess teachers’ delivery of instruction. Teachers are provided with feedback and scheduled to partake in inter class visitations. Teachers observe colleagues presenting lessons and give feedback on what was observed. The Community Learning Support Organization provides the principal with additional support through a series of workshops for teachers to sharpen their craft. The school also provides on-site coaching by literacy, math and science facilitators. They meet with teachers during common planning time to go over strategies to deepen their understanding of the content for planning lessons that are engaging thus improving their pedagogy.

The inquiry team was instrumental in helping teachers understand the importance of using data to drive instruction to improve students’ learning. They held several workshops using different research-based studies to demystify the process of inquiry-based learning. Teachers started conducting their own case studies, working with a group of students to improve their skills. .

The school leaders have built grade team meetings into the teachers’ program. In these, teachers discuss students’ academic and social development. They analyze data to modify curriculum to meet students’ learning needs. However, the school does not provide teachers with a continuous, tiered professional development plan that will enhance teachers’ strategies for engaging learning and differentiated approaches to promote and accelerate students’ learning.

The school has developed a strong partnership with IFETAYO Cultural Arts, which provides instruction in African dance. The Rising Stars/Shining Stars program provides arts instruction to one hundred students. The school has also been participating in Lego League Robotic Program, which has students competing in tournaments Citywide. The school was awarded a grant to expand the cello and violin program. The guidance team fosters students’ self-esteem through a Peacebuilders’ Group. The school also has elected a student council, which is involved in the beautification and improvement of the school and has trained students to be peer mediators.

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.

The principal has a clear long-term vision for the school, which promotes a positive, nurturing and caring environment and gives back to the school community. The principal is incrementally introducing procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth for students and teachers. The mantra is "Raise academic rigor across the board."

The school has numerous ways by which they formatively assess students. The school does a good job assessing students, and there are many stop points throughout the school year. However, the school does not have a structure in place to carefully monitor and revise students' goals, which include interim measurable goals and timeframes that will enable the school know whether or not the students are meeting or exceeding their learning goals.

The learning support team and school leadership team review trends and patterns that are discovered from summative and formative data. This data determines how to support teachers in the revision of curriculum, planning differentiated lessons, and revising learning plans throughout the year. The school has many opportunities for teachers to be supported. For example, the school support organization comes and conducts professional development. In addition, facilitators in English language arts, math, social studies and science provide additional training, during common planning time. However, the school does not have a structured professional development plan that evaluates teachers' professional growth at different intervals throughout the year to ensure that teachers are implementing strategies from training to challenge students academically.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Langston Hughes School	△	➤	✓	+
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