

Quality Review Report

2008-2009

Henry Highland Garnet School for Success

Elementary School 175

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

Principal: Cheryl McClendon

Dates of review: March 9 – 10, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Gale Reeves

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Henry Highland Garnet School for Success is an elementary school with 362 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 75% Black, 20% Hispanic, 1% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 91.1%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 68% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The principal has completed her first year at the school and during that time both she and her cabinet have positively affected the school's culture and climate. The principal is well respected by the entire school community and through well-judged strategic decisions implements and shares a clear vision for the school. She leads a collegial and collaborative team of educators that results in an effective teaching and learning community where high expectations and academic rigor are swiftly becoming the norm. The staff effectively uses data for informing instruction and monitoring the progress of individual and groups of students. A well-developed culture of trust and collaboration encourages teachers to learn from each other and supports their personal and academic growth.

Through the assistance of school leaders, teacher leaders and instructional specialists, the pedagogic skills of teachers are developing well. However, from a planning point of view, quantifiable goals and interim measurable benchmarks in some core subjects are not yet clearly defined and communicated to the school community. Whilst student engagement is high, in some cases, students are unaware of the links between aspects of the classroom activity and the lesson's overall purpose. On a positive note, although exemplary teaching practices are not yet systemic, school leaders continue to strive for consistency in instruction that leads to all lessons challenging students and to be reflective of those practices seen in the best classrooms.

School constituents use regular assessments to modify strategic planning and instructional goals so that they are well aligned to the needs of students. As such, staff gather a range of data to understand student performance and regularly collaborate to identify trends and modify practice. In response to the previous Quality Review, school leaders have organized assessment results to create more precise summaries of students' academic needs to enable the setting of learner-specific interim goals. This is not yet extended to all core subjects to aid school constituents in assessing student progress in all content areas. Students are able to articulate their broad personal academic goals in most but not all core subjects.

Analysis of school data indicates an overall increase in student performance. School leaders provide additional supports to students who require them, with well-targeted interventions during the school day as well as after school. External partnerships are embraced and are well utilized throughout the school day. As a result of the strong partnerships with parents and outside organizations, positive gains are evident in students' social, emotional and academic development.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and staff consistently gather, analyze and utilize a wide range of data to understand student performance.
- The principal implements and shares a clear vision for the school through well-judged strategic decisions.
- The administration has developed a culture of trust, respect and collaboration that encourages teachers to learn from each other and supports the personal growth of students and staff.
- The school has developed strong partnerships with parents and outside organizations that have a positive impact on students' social, emotional and academic development.
- There are well-developed collaborative and effective professional development systems that support all teachers.
- Regular assessments are used to modify strategic planning and instructional goals so they are well aligned to the needs of students.

What the school needs to improve

- Establish interim measurable benchmarks in all core subjects as part of the goal setting process so that school constituents can assess student progress toward meeting established learning targets.
- Refine, develop and communicate quantifiable goals in all core subjects with teachers, parents and students.
- Continue to strive for consistency in instruction that leads to all lessons delivering the high expectations and levels of challenge seen in the best classrooms.
- Ensure that students in all classrooms know the precise purpose of lessons so that their efforts are seen as relevant and well focused.

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 well developed.

The principal and staff have established exemplary systems for collecting, analyzing and utilizing a wide range of data with a focus on improving student achievement. Teachers in all classrooms not only maintain data binders in English language arts, math, social studies and science but they actively utilize the data when planning for the learning needs of individuals and groups of students. Parents work in partnership with school leaders and staff to share information about their child and to keep abreast of their progress. Parents indicate that they communicate with teachers on a daily or weekly basis. One parent stated, "I don't feel there is any information that I don't know," and others report that staff frequently share and review data with them.

School staff review informal and formative assessment data such as State assessments, running records, baseline writing pre- and post-assessments as well as teacher made tests. As a result of their frequent analysis of the information, school staff are then able to adapt the curriculum to more accurately meet students' needs.

During weekly scheduled cabinet meetings, school staff review and monitor data results. The team noted the decline in performance levels 3 and 4 in both English language arts and math. As a result not only is renewed emphasis being placed on ensuring differentiated learning tasks in the classrooms, but an extended day program has been created to provide enrichment activities to these students. Additionally, the principal collects and reviews student data every 6-8 weeks from each classroom teacher. School leaders hold grade meetings, and, if necessary, individual meetings with teachers, in order to address trends and to plan appropriate adaptations to learning goals. School leaders reviewed the school's Progress Report and noted that black students in the lowest third failed to make enough gain in order for the school to receive additional credit. As a result, the principal now requests a strategic support plan from each teacher for each student in this specific subgroup.

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.

Teachers are actively engaged in goal setting. School wide goals are established for English language arts, social studies and math. Teachers have an excellent understanding of students' achievement levels and use this information effectively to enhance student learning.

While interim measurable goals are established in some core subjects, the school has not yet taken the important step of setting interim measurable goals in all subjects to serve as a benchmark against which students' rates of progress can be measured. School leaders recognize and acknowledge the need to establish interim measurable benchmarks in each core subject as part of goal setting so that school constituents can assess student progress toward meeting established learning targets.

The school's Comprehensive Educational Plan is developed with thoughtful input from varied constituents in the school community. Additionally, the cabinet frequently reviews and evaluates the plan's goals in order to ascertain progress. Parents and staff report that school staff consult with them and that their input in goal setting is valued. The school effectively communicates high expectations for both behavior and academic study to parents and students. In response they are able to articulate what these are and how they can be achieved. These expectations are also communicated in tangible ways such as through the rich display of students' work in all classrooms and corridor bulletin boards with corresponding rubrics. Teachers regularly confer with students to review learning targets. Parents especially appreciate the school's "open door" policy. The school systematically reviews students' progress with them, while also engaging students in the process.

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 well developed.

The core curriculum in all content areas is closely aligned with State standards. Students benefit from an increasingly broad curriculum which interests them. Students demonstrate high levels of motivation and self-discipline in classrooms and around the school. Essential questions guide the development of lessons in social studies and science. As such, the development of project based learning activities is starting to give students the opportunity to be more active learners. The new science coordinator supports teachers with the development of science lessons, utilizing *Full Option Science System* in the upper grades and *Insights* at lower grade levels. This has resulted in a renewed focus on inquiry based science instruction. There is a school wide music band comprised of students in grades K through 5. Additionally, a *Music and the Brain* grant ensures that students receive instrumental instruction on keyboards.

Teachers use regular assessments to modify strategic planning and instructional goals and they are well aligned to the needs of students. Classroom teachers develop workstations in order to ensure that differentiated activities are aligned to the learning needs of individual and groups of students. As a result, students are making good gains in achievement.

The principal effectively reviews student data and, via daily walkthroughs and observations, ensures the alignment of learning tasks to students' next steps. In each classroom, data bulletin boards indicate students' academic progress utilizing the categories: "beginning, developing and secure". However, while lessons are differentiated in some subjects, they are not all rigorous. This lack of rigor and differentiation results in some classroom activities lacking focus as students do not always see the relevance between the task and the lesson's overall purpose. However, school leaders continue to strive for consistency in instruction that leads to all lessons

delivering the high expectations and levels of challenge seen in the best classrooms in the school.

The principal implements and shares a clear vision for the school through well-judged strategic decisions. As a result of a review of last year's data, school leaders determined that the English language arts curriculum did not sufficiently address the learning needs of students in grades 4 and 5 and did not challenge higher achieving students enough. As such, they made the strategic decision to purchase a helpful comprehension toolkit. Staff members report that the new program strongly supports the development of lessons that are much more engaging and challenging and encourages the development of higher order thinking skills.

School leaders strategically utilize the budget and other resources in order to support improvements in learning. Adults in the school trust and help each other, as evidenced by their ongoing sharing of resources. School leaders celebrate staff and student accomplishments via bulletin board displays and assembly programs. School leaders demonstrate distributive leadership; teachers readily embrace this and assume varied leadership roles in order to support the success of assorted initiatives.

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.

There is a focused school wide professional development plan. Additionally, teachers develop individual professional development plans during one-to-one conferences with school leaders. Teachers and the principal periodically review goals throughout the school year. This has led to rapid growth in teaching skills. As a result of daily walkthroughs, observations and/or review of student work, school leaders and teachers collaboratively develop specific individualized plans as needed, in order to support the development of specific pedagogical practices.

There are well-developed collaborative and effective professional development systems that support all teachers. The principal assigns instructional specialists to assist specific teachers and arranges mentors for all new teachers. This level of collegial support ensures that new teachers are quickly embraced into the culture of the school. Teachers are pleased with the level of assistance and state that there are varied opportunities to learn from each other. Common grade level planning meetings, as well as focused professional development sessions each Friday ensures that grade level teams of teachers collectively build their skills. Focused intervisitations facilitate the teaching staff's ability to expand their instructional skills. These intervisitations also help to build leadership skills. As a result of the varied support structures and continued reflection of practices, the administration knows the strength and the next steps of their teachers very well.

This year the expansion of the inquiry team has resulted in two teams, both focused on reading comprehension. Indications that the progress made by higher achieving students dipped last year has led to one team's focus placed appropriately on higher achievers who have lost gains. The second team remains focused on the school's

lowest third. Team members confer closely with all teachers who support these students and this focused structure has led to a notable growth in their achievement levels.

Mental health care workers from the Mission Society provide further help to third grade students. This community-based partner also supports the school with after school, summer and intersession programs. Additional partners such as the Jewish Community Center of Manhattan, America Reads and Counts and Barnard College provide academic intervention services to specific students. The principal ensures that the school's internal guidance supports are directly aligned with external supports in order to ensure that students' social and emotional needs are met in a cohesive manner that directly impacts academic improvements.

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.

Administrators and coaches regularly monitor student data in order to identify gaps in learning. Teachers utilize regular assessments to modify strategic planning and instructional goals so they are well aligned to the needs of students. Systems are well established and the increased student performance of the lowest achieving students provides evidence of their effectiveness. The school's evaluation is accurate and shared well through good professional relationships with staff so that there is a common understanding of the need to improve the impact of classroom practice on learning.

Science goals are aimed at grade level expectations. As a result, teachers' plans do not reflect the same level of specificity to learning goals as is noted in other content areas. The school recognizes the need to refine, develop and communicate quantifiable goals in all core subjects with teachers, parents and students. Likewise, unlike other core subject areas, interim checkpoints are not yet established for science and music. This has influenced the school's ability to accurately monitor progress in these subjects and to ensure that students in all classrooms know the precise purpose of lessons so that their efforts are well focused.

The principal's vision is that of a constructivist. She believes that "all learners must develop their own understanding." Through their actions, it is clear that school staff share the principal's vision. As such, the alignment and periodic review of school-based systems demonstrate the school community's understanding of why they need to consolidate specific strategies in order to make the vision a reality.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Henry Highland Garnet School for Success	△	▷	✓	+
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>	△	➤	✓	+			
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>	△	➤	✓	+			
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>	△	➤	✓	+			
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							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed