

Quality Review Report 2009-2010

New Horizons Middle School

Middle School 442

**317 Hoyt Street
Brooklyn
NY 11231**

Principal: Deanna Diable

Dates of review: February 8 - 9, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Anita Skop

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

New Horizons Middle School is a middle school with 218 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 45% Black, 46% Hispanic, 7% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 42% special education students. Boys account for 60% of the students enrolled and girls account for 40%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 90.3%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

New Horizons Middle School is an exceptional learning community where all classes exemplify the success of the collaborative team teaching model. The school's energetic and committed principal, in her first official year as school leader, has created an inclusive, collaborative and academically challenging environment that sees no boundaries or labels for students. All students actively participate in a rich, standards driven curriculum that includes project based experiential learning, differentiated instruction, and highly motivating opportunities for enrichment and growth. Students speak in great depth and with clear understanding about their personal growth and their targeted goals. Teachers universally meet in inquiry teams at their grade levels and in departmental groupings on a weekly basis to reflect on student work and hone instructional practices. This has resulted in the school continuously showing progress and reaching high levels of achievement with both general education students and the extremely large number of special education students. The school uses data highly effectively, in a wide range of modalities, to frequently assess student needs, set interim and long-term goals, and adjust both content and instruction to address the identified needs. The school sees learning as important in all content areas and has developed tools that enable all teachers to modify materials to ensure student access. Content reading bands listings align student-reading levels with content specific materials at the appropriate readability level. A supportive teacher culture pairs new teachers with experienced teachers as class partners, creating a painless transition. The school responds to student and parent concerns. It has revised a number of previous practices to deal with issues raised through student comments and the Learning Environment Survey. Study groups and intervisitations, in school and across networks have strengthened professional development for both social and academic areas of need.

While the school's level of differentiation is deep, small numbers of students at the highest level of achievement do not always receive sufficient challenge. Additionally, the school has not established a universal protocol to provide measurable data driven criteria for inquiry team success. Lastly, though the school works assiduously to share student needs and high expectations, limited numbers of parents are involved in school wide decision making. A large number of innovative partnerships with cultural and community institutions enhance opportunities for students and teachers. New Horizons is a school where the entire community has shaped a world that is inclusive, respectful and nurturing, so that all students and staff can, and do continuously work to reach their highest potential.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school maintains an extraordinary level of transparency in all aspects of decision-making, fostering a collaborative, committed community where all members share a common vision and work to accelerate achievement.
 - Coaches and support personnel work closely with inquiry teams and staff to share findings with the principal at weekly cabinet meetings. They share the minutes from these meetings with the entire faculty so that all benefit from a wide repertoire of successful strategies and instructional methodologies.
 - The school regularly uses data to reflect on the success of targeted long-term plans. The implementation of the grade 7 grammatical focus this year, which is already having marked success in improving student writing skills, was the direct result of the ongoing evaluation of formative writing assessments.
- Teacher teams in numerous configurations meet weekly to probe deeply into firmly embedded inquiry investigations that are the foundation of all aspects of school planning, and create a coherent focus school wide.
 - All members of the school faculty participate in collaborative inquiry at both grade and department levels. These teams meet regularly and consistently evaluate the implementation and impact of both content specific targets and instructional practices by analyzing student work and reflecting on teacher observations. This has resulted in clearly targeted strategies, such as literacy support in all content areas that have accelerated student learning.
 - Each department has developed specific, interim sub goals because of team item analysis of student assessments. These goals have deepened the level of student understanding in all content areas and led to the focus on non-fiction.
- High quality levels of differentiation, consistently seen in all classrooms, target identified student needs, which staff review and refine on a weekly, and sometimes daily basis, assuring access to a rigorous curriculum for all.
 - In alignment with the school's virtually universal collaborative team teaching structure, it groups students flexibly by functional level, learning style, areas of strength and/or content knowledge, depending on the specific lesson. This has enabled the school to address a wide range of student needs and led to extraordinary levels of differentiation and high levels of student engagement and thinking.
 - The school shares reading bands with content area teachers. These define student functional groupings, in alignment with the balanced literacy assessments, facilitating the assignment of materials with the correct readability to all students, in all content areas.

- Extensive and varied cultural collaborations and a strong grant writing team enable the school to provide students with academic, social, and service learning options that deepen the link between education and the real world.
 - Responding to student comments and staff observations, the school has conducted school wide study groups that focus on current literature reflecting best practices and current findings on how adults should talk to adolescents. This has led to a complete change in the tone of the building, going from a punitive culture to a “calm” culture.
 - The school, in collaborative partnership with a large home improvement corporation, is enhancing student understanding of the need to “go green” by developing a green roof vegetable garden, that brings classroom science and ecology studies to life. This highly motivating and engaging experience was an in depth study in project based learning that has increased student vocabulary, content knowledge and life skills.
- Departments, teacher teams, and individual teachers design assessments to measure growth at defined intervals, ensuring that targeted strategies have a positive effect on achievement by aligning instruction and learning.
 - Reading response journals, writing workshop journals, teacher conferences three times a week and rubric based projects, as well as ad hoc teacher observation of student work, provide teachers with an in depth picture of student growth. This enables them to adjust the curriculum and modalities for students on an ongoing basis.
 - The school has universally adopted an enrichment protocol that assigns all students to small group instructional sessions, which are part of daily instruction. Based on identified needs, strengths and/or enhanced learning opportunities, these classes provide support with a challenging focus at a range of levels so that all students are growing and are highly motivated.
- The school’s collaborative atmosphere generates a culture where professional development, intervisitations, and peer and administrative observations support - increasing learning for all members of the faculty.
 - The school’s collective team teaching structure, honored by “weteamteach.org” as an exemplar, has enabled the principal to pair new teachers with experienced teachers, providing ongoing support and creating collaborative teacher teams in every classroom. These pairings result in seamless transitions that quickly bring new teachers to expected levels of successful practice.
 - The school is a true learning community where all teachers participate in professional development as a matter of course. Following the principal’s reflection on the quality of student work and the tasks assigned, the art teachers currently receive support to expand the learning of students and attend training at several cultural institutions.
- The school’s unique universal collaborative team teaching setting has shaped an environment that is inclusive, respectful and nurturing, so that all members of the school community joyfully strive to reach their highest potential.

- In order to address the behavioral issues raised in the Learning Environment Survey last year, the school has built a partnership with a community based organization, training teachers and implementing the positive behavioral interventions and supports program that has dramatically lowered the number of suspension and incidents.
- The school's small group advisory program, inclusive of all students and staff, has made this a community where all students are well known to many adults who genuinely care about them and help them to reach their academic and social goals. Students clearly understand the purpose of school in their lives and explain in depth why they are working to increase their levels of success. As one student stated, "I need to do well in school because when I become a mother, I want to be able to help them so they will be successful."

What the school needs to improve

- Deepen and enhance the level of parental involvement in school decision making.
 - The school consistently reaches out to parents, sharing high expectations and student goals, through a wide range of traditional and electronic options. This includes a Sharing the Dream grant, which sponsors bi-monthly dinner meetings at local restaurants. However, parental involvement in school wide decision making is limited to school leadership team participation.
- Develop a targeted list of measurable data based goals that guide and focus inquiry work for each team.
 - The school has well established collaborative teacher teams that are deeply engaged in inquiry work, and school leaders monitor the success of target population students. However, it has not established specific measurable, data based criteria for team success to ensure the consistency of findings, as a school wide protocol.
- Expand and intensify the experiential options for the highest achieving students.
 - School leaders and faculty consistently align curricula to state standards and target specific standards to address student needs. However, due to the school's collaborative team teaching structure, the very highest achieving students, often only one or two students in a class, do not always receive sufficient challenge when work is not rigorous enough or the use of individually targeted projects is limited.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: New Horizons Middle School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overall QR Score				X
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?				X
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?				X
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?				X
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?				X
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?				X
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?				X
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X

Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?				X			
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?				X			
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?				X			
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X			
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?				X			
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?				X			
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?				X			
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals 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 progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?				X			
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?				X			
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?				X			
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X			
Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed