

# Quality Review Report 2009-2010

Abrams Stevens Hewitt  
Elementary School 130  
750 Prospect Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10455

Principal: Lourdes Velazquez-Peay

Dates of review: April 14 - 15, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Timothy Behr

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Abram Stevens Hewitt School is an elementary school with 542 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 25% Black, 73% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 28% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 92.0%.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is proficient.**

The Abram Stevens Hewitt School is a flourishing community that works collaboratively to provide a stimulating, safe, and enriching experience for students. The principal has a vision of where she wants the school to be and in her tenure, there has been a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. For the past three years there has been improvement in student performance and engagement, particularly in English language arts and math, as evidenced by standardized test scores. The principal is highly regarded by the school community and she is readily available to parents, students, and staff. Parents speak highly of the administrative team and teachers. As one parent stated, "This school is great and feels like home." A comprehensive after school program and effective partnerships provide opportunities for students to expand their learning potential. The school community expresses a high level of commitment and high expectations for all students

The Comprehensive Education Plan has concise objectives and actions for school improvement, resulting in grade and subject goals across the school, which then informs instruction. However, the school is aware that the use of the tool to monitor student subgroups to ensure that they are achieving their goals throughout the year is not an embedded practice. As a result not all subgroups make exemplary gains, as evidenced by the school's Progress Report. The administration schedules organized opportunities during the school day for collaborative grade-level teacher teams to meet to analyze summative and formative data, including classroom work, and to plan curriculum and classroom lessons that align to State standards. These meetings provide teachers the opportunity to reflect on their teaching practice and student performance. However, there are limited opportunities for intervisitations and thought there are many opportunities for professional development, these are often not differentiated to meet the needs of teachers at various stages of development.

The school has many initiatives that focus on improving teaching and learning. For example, adopting the Fountas and Pinnell assessment system enables teachers, together with students, to set learning goals. However, since the program is new this year, teachers do not use this information consistently across all subjects and grades. Therefore it is difficult to establish targeted student learning outcomes on a regular basis. Some lessons lack rigor and do not maximize students' learning potential. As a result, the school does not consistently challenge and engage individual and groups of students. Students express happiness about coming to school and say that their teacher's expectations motivate and encourage them to do their best. They speak positively of the special programs and see connections between art, math, literacy, and culture.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school is a safe place where students are respected, valued, and encouraged to do their best with consistent support of the administration, coaches, and their teachers.
  - Good behavior is celebrated throughout the school and is extending students' academic learning and resulting in fewer suspensions. Rubrics are posted throughout the school to remind students of expected behaviors. Students earn tokens for positive behavior that are redeemable. Classes are also rewarded with a special activity if they earn the most tokens. As a result, students feel that the school experience is rewarding and teachers comment about the positive effects that the program has had on classroom management.
  - Teachers develop individualized action plans for their students during team meetings to ensure that there are suitable supports in place to improve achievement. Recommendations for students to participate in social-academic after school activities, such as the expanded arts program, extend classroom learning. As a result, there is an increase in student outcomes in English language arts, math and particularly in student self esteem.
- The varied and effective student support programs and collaborations provide students with opportunities to grow socially, emotionally and academically.
  - Bronx Work's Express to Success after school program successfully supports the academic and personal growth of students. They participate in a wide variety of theme-based learning projects, trips, and activities across the content areas. During power-hour Friday, classes compete in various sporting games in a respectful and fun learning environment. Students have ample opportunities to enhance their learning skills, and receive high levels of support around their needs from staff trained to treat youngsters with respect and dignity.
  - The school received a grant to work with the Turnaround for Children Foundation. A full-time social worker provides students and families with social and behavioral support to improve student performance. Focused professional development for the administration and teachers assist in the development of a productive learning environment and instructional coherence.
- The school provides valuable opportunities for teachers to collaboratively enhance their craft through reflection and a willingness to learn from one another.
  - The majority of teachers participate in team collaborations that rely on the inquiry protocol. The teams review student work, assessments and teacher practice, which results in articulate and purposeful classroom instructional decisions in English language arts in all grades. The work of these teams highlights differentiated strategies to promote student engagement and learning.
  - The fifth grade collaborative teacher team meets weekly utilizing an inquiry approach to analyze summative and formative data to support student vocabulary development. As a result, there has been an increase in student

performance as evidenced by an increase in students' independent reading levels and periodic assessment results.

- The school makes informed organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals to meet the needs of students.
  - Through the effective use of collaborative teacher teams, the administration emphasizes periodic reviews of curricula and instructional practices, which a core inquiry team monitors closely. This review of curricula and teacher practice has resulted in improvement in English language arts and math scores over a three-year period.
  - Collaborative teamwork has been crucial in establishing effective communication systems between administration and faculty and has led to curriculum revisions in all core subjects. For example, the school is using the Fountas-Pinnell assessment system to plan small-group and guided reading instruction.
- The principal has developed a school community that is focused on interpreting data to develop focused learning goals in order to maintain and enhance student learning.
  - This year every teacher is using the Fountas-Pinnell Benchmark System to plan small group and guided reading instruction. This collaborative and reflective approach defines teacher team discussions and provides commonality and consistency to the inquiry process. As a result, clear goals are identified and the next steps are outlined to promote the adjustments necessary to enhance student progress.
  - Academic intervention plans are strengthened as a result of focused attention to the attainment of the school's data-based goals. These goals are determined by the information contained in the Learning Environment Survey and the Progress Report, and are articulated in the Comprehensive Educational Plan to ensure communication with the school community. For example, academic intervention services now provide targeted interventions to meet students' specific needs.
- The school has good communication systems for keeping parents informed of school activities and their children's progress.
  - The Express to Success after school program provides academic, arts and community-based enrichment activities to support students' experiential learning. Parental involvement in this program includes participation in field trips and tutoring. Counselors communicate daily with parents. Program organizers also participate in School Leadership Team meetings. As a result, parents are able to gain additional information about their children, which empowers them to work with the school to plan for next-step interventions.
  - The home-school connection is supported through student progress reports, ARIS parent trainings, monthly newsletters, and parent meetings. These
  - Initiatives enable parents to be informed of their child's current academic performance to support student learning through an ongoing communication system

## What the school needs to improve

Refine curricula to emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills for a variety of learners with various needs.

- Currently the school is inconsistent in providing challenging and engaging curricula for all students, including the highest performing and the high-need students. As a result, most students are not performing at maximum potential.
- In some lessons, the learning outcomes are unclear and the lessons lack pace and focus. As a result, the opportunity is lost to maximize learning potential. Students receive insufficient challenge and make little progress or struggle with content that teachers have not adequately matched to their need based on prior knowledge.
- Develop a systemic school-wide procedure where teachers and collaborative teacher teams consistently monitor, evaluate, and revise systems for assessing students with benchmarks throughout the year.
  - Progress of groups of students is monitored using a variety of methods including running records, periodic assessments, rubrics, and grade books. However, the school does not utilize a tracking tool, which would enable them to readily identify students making or not making progress over time.
  - The school has not developed concise interim benchmarks across subject areas so that the administration and faculty can monitor progress and revise the instructional programs for individuals and groups of students as necessary.
- Continue to enhance teachers' understanding of best practices by consistently providing opportunities for intervisitations within and outside the school.
  - Although teachers have embraced the many formal and informal professional development activities, the school leadership does not consistently pinpoint these interventions specific to teachers' needs. As a result, teachers have few opportunities to learn in a risk-free environment that promotes their own learning to improve the school's overall academic program.
  - Although there are pockets of very effective collaboration between teachers, there are not yet sufficient opportunities for intervisitations. As a result, useful opportunities for teachers to observe good practices and develop a better understanding of how the school evaluates the progress of students through its program of instruction are limited.
- Refine and review the progress of the special education and English language learner subgroups to ensure students are attaining their goals throughout the year.
  - The school is using formative and summative data to monitor individual students. However, the school is not using a tracking instrument to measure the progress of special education students and English language learners. As a result, some teachers are not modifying their instructional practice to meet the needs of these students, resulting in insufficient gains on standardized tests.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: <b>Abrams Stevens Hewitt</b>	Δ	▶	✓	+
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	Δ	▶	✓	+
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?		<b>X</b>		
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?			<b>X</b>	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?				<b>X</b>
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	Δ	▶	✓	+
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			<b>X</b>	
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?			<b>X</b>	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?			<b>X</b>	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>	

**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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>		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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X	

**Quality Review Scoring Key**

△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed
---	----------------	---	---	---	------------	---	----------------