

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

Nicholas Herkimer School

Elementary-Middle School 155

**1355 Herkimer Street
Brooklyn
NY 11233**

Principal: Nelly Cortes

Dates of review: December 1 - 2, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Ainslie Cumberbatch

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Nicholas Herkimer School is an elementary-middle school with 580 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 60% Black, 38% Hispanic, 1% Asian students and less than 1% white. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 90.4%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders routinely make well-informed and effective organizational decisions that align with school priorities and serve to accelerate teaching and learning.
 - A review of student growth at the end of the 2009-2010 school year revealed inadequate progress in literacy and math prompting the principal to change supplemental educational service providers at the beginning of this school year. In addition, the principal instituted a new online tutorial program designed to meet the needs of special education students. As a result, recent interim assessments reveal a significant improvement in student performance.
 - The school programs teachers to engage routinely in common planning in grade and subject area teams. Subsequently, teachers focus on examination of school data and case-conferencing related to targeted groups of students. This process allows the school to frequently monitor and adjust school plans to meet student needs based on teacher feedback. A teacher remarks, “The principal lets us develop ideas for the benefit of the children.”
- School administrators use effective systems for monitoring teacher practice with a clear focus on improving teaching and learning.
 - School leaders actively monitor the quality of instruction to ensure that it aligns to student needs and is standards-based. Observation reports contain feedback directly linked to each teacher’s professional goals with clear next steps to further improve pedagogy. As a result, there is a strong school-wide focus on improving instructional strategies.
 - School leaders provide a range of supports to teachers that include one-on-one conferencing, the support of two coaches, collaboration within teams and a mentor for the new teacher. Coaches provide professional development designed to support teacher understanding and implementation of strategies and curriculum. As a result, teachers report a strong feeling of support in a family-like environment and that they are well prepared to meet school goals.
- School staff deliver an engaging standards-based curriculum that addresses the needs of a diverse group of learners.
 - School curricula include Reading First and a Core Knowledge program that focus on anchor standards to support student learning. Through collaborative planning and school-wide attention to literacy, teachers develop instructional strategies to improve students’ proficiency levels. As a result, teachers share a common understanding of student needs and articulate steps for improvement.
 - The school’s curricula include thematic units that engage and challenge students. Curriculum maps align instructional practices across the school and focus teachers and students on the development of goals related to student grade level and whole school data. Consequently, the results of unit and bi-weekly assessments that accompany the maps trigger student groupings and inform professional development needs for staff.

- Teachers work effectively in collaborative teams to analyze school-based data and develop assessments to strengthen instructional practices.
 - Teams of teachers administer unit assessments and bi-weekly assessments to evaluate student progress against key standards. They use the results to inform curriculum mapping, professional development, and material choice. As a result, teachers design instruction to address students' learning needs.
 - Teacher teams review school-developed spreadsheets charting student progress on periodic assessments to identify tiered support for English language learners and students with disabilities relative to three levels, intensive, strategic and benchmark. As a result, these subgroups receive targeted attention and make steady progress towards proficiency in English language arts and math.
- The principal and staff work hard to create a calm, respectful and supportive environment for teaching and learning to take place.
 - Students state that they have multiple adults to support their learning and declare that their teachers are extremely helpful and dedicated. They share that staff care about them and are available if they need support. Consequently, students are motivated to learn and maintain strong relationships with teachers.
 - Students benefit from the close relationships they have with staff, who exhibit great concern for each student's academic and social progress. Students applaud the fact that teachers give up their lunch period to tutor them and in turn, they pay close attention in class. The principal also connects regularly with students and displays genuine concern for their well-being. Students recognize this quality and state, "The principal is someone you can count on."
- The principal communicates a clear vision and nurtures a school community to enable all participants to focus on accelerating student learning.
 - The school analyzes performance assessments and creates long- and short-term goals with students as they work to become literate individuals. School priorities and planning documents, such as the Comprehensive Educational Plan and core knowledge planning templates, address skill deficits and support student growth. Consequently, the entire school community focuses on school improvement.
 - School leaders use ARIS, as well as parent and teacher team meetings, to thoroughly review school data. Student work products that evidence proficiency in learning outcomes provide teachers with information about student growth that they share with students and parents. Subsequently, teachers adjust goals, plans, and supports to address student needs and parent concerns.

What the school needs to improve

- Promote greater consistency in the use of data to differentiate instruction so that all lessons are rigorous and engage students at their current achievement level.
 - Most teacher plans are closely tied to the curriculum in order to ensure instructional coherence. Teachers accommodate struggling students, including English language learners and special education students, by varying activities and scaffolding the vocabulary of the content. However, as this alignment is not consistent, not all students receive suitable learning opportunities.

- While there is evidence of differentiation in some classes, it is not yet an embedded practice school wide. Some teachers assign generic assignments to their students although they display a wide range of ability thus missing opportunities for some students to make enhanced progress. Although students are generally engaged, lessons do not always reflect multiple entry points, nor do they consistently support or extend successful learning for all students.
- Provide students with specific prioritized next steps to advance learning goals.
 - Current assessment practices lack consistency in the evaluation of student work. Posted work contains teacher remarks that simply repeat the expectation listed in the rubric rather than including next steps toward improving overall quality with illustrated revision processes. As a result, students do not always receive critical feedback to inform them of their next learning steps.
 - Teachers conference with students periodically and discuss their progress. However, not all teachers engage students in self-reflecting on their work and developing plans for moving forward. As a result, students are not always able to identify next steps autonomously in their journey to success.
- Expand the level of parent engagement that includes opportunities for parents to participate regularly in school decision-making and other leadership roles.
 - The school schedules workshops such as ARIS, bilingual English as a second language, and drug awareness, to support parents. Parents express “a perfect relationship with teachers.” However, the school does not sufficiently involve parents in an open exchange of information, or training on instructional programs, and as a result, parents are not fully informed of how they may support their children at home to improve their academic performance.
 - The school seeks out parents to serve on the school leadership team and parents’ association to encourage parent voice. Teachers also reach out to parents via letters and telephone to elicit their input, support, and participation in events such as multi-cultural celebrations and award ceremonies. However, parent participation and feedback at school meetings remains low, as the school does not yet have sufficient activities to ignite increased parent involvement.
- Further develop school capacity to provide students and families with opportunities for personal growth and academic development.
 - The school uses its guidance counselor and itinerant social worker to provide students with social and emotional support. Although teachers identify a need for a support structure that includes character development or advisories, at present, teachers do not receive training to build their expertise in this area. As a result, teacher capacity limits the type of support offered to students.
 - The school’s emerging academic partnership with two colleges provides tutorial and student teaching services. Students also benefit from a comprehensive after-school program that includes tutorial and recreational services. However, relative to incidents in the cafeteria, and inappropriate behavior of a core group of students, partnerships to support the social-emotional needs of students are not yet evident.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: Nicholas Herkimer School	UD	D	P	WD
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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	
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, 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		

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>	UD	D	P	WD			
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					
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>	UD	D	P	WD			
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					
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>	UD	D	P	WD			
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				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed