

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

Henry Highland Garnet

Elementary School M175

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

Principal: Cheryl McClendon

Dates of review: January 10 - 11, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Gale Reeves

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Henry Highland Garnet is an elementary school with 387 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 71.31% Black, 22.73% Hispanic, .77% White, and 1.80% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 93.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal aligns resources and makes effective organizational decisions across all aspects of the school to support improvements in learning.
 - The principal's budgeting, coupled with staff input, results in strategic use of resources that are well aligned to the principal's performance goals and the Comprehensive Education Plan. The English language arts and math coaches provide direct support to teachers. When an item skills analysis revealed deficiencies in specific critical thinking skills, the coaches and key members of the faculty revised the curriculum to integrate specific skills in the standards aligned curriculum. Additionally, they develop baseline and bimonthly assessments. As a result, a comparison with baseline data reveals that students demonstrate progress in their independent reading levels and end of unit math performance assessments, resulting in increased academic achievement.
 - A Wilson trained special education teacher supports FUNdations in the lower grades and an experienced science coordinator ensures an engaging, inquiry-based curriculum across all grade levels. Teachers are strategically matched with specific small groups of students during the extended day program in order to maximize their learning. This results in gains by the lowest achieving students. Additionally, time is allocated for teachers serve as critical friends to each other, which results in genuine ownership of school goals with a focus on improving instructional practices and student achievement.
- Through regular use of a wide range of relevant data, leaders and faculty have an understanding of the performance and progress of individuals by group and subject which informs effective instructional and organizational decisions.
 - The frequent review of suspension and attendance data has led to strategies that have increased the monthly student attendance rate and decreased the number of superintendent suspensions. Additionally, the effective use of teacher data reports and periodic and state assessments has resulted in a notable increase in student progress, thereby narrowing the achievement gap for Black and Hispanic students. The concern over the performance of the lowest and highest achieving students serve as the rationale for the creation of an intervention team, specifically targeting Levels one and two students during Saturday Academy and an after-school program focused on the needs of higher achieving students. Strategic efforts result in focused instruction that is increasing student achievement as noted on bimonthly assessment data.
- The school maintains a supportive environment with high expectations for learning and behavior that are consistently shared with parents and students.
 - Students actively participate in shaping school wide decisions, thereby bolstering their self esteem and the development of their leadership skills. Input from the student government which expressed the desire for more healthy food, led to the creation of a salad bar in the student cafeteria. The student government further negotiated dress down day on specific scheduled half days. Additionally, a review of the school survey, suspension data and incident reports led to an anti-bullying initiative geared to students in the upper grades. The school's small, inclusive culture, allows students to be well known by staff who support their

- academic and social growth. Students and parents appreciate that they can turn to teachers and members of the pupil personnel team to help resolve personal issues and concerns that interfere with learning. As a result, students report that they “feel safe” and are able to focus more on their academic achievement.
- Parents are key partners in their child’s education and are well informed, resulting in increased parental support and a shared commitment to school’s goals.
 - The prominently displayed attendance banner, class publishing parties, academic assemblies, teacher-personalized phone calls and emails, individualized bimonthly progress letters and school newsletters are cited as the myriad ways that school personnel keep families informed and convey their high expectations for student attendance, social/emotional and academic progress. Parents note that school staff is highly accessible throughout the school day. These increased levels of communication allow families to better support their children at home, resulting in increased levels of parent participation and involvement. Additionally, a broad-based level of support results in the active involvement of parents on the school leadership team. Parents feel valued as partners in the process. Parent leaders met with school nutrition staff to initiate a school-wide healthy eating habits campaign and contacted the Parks Department and received permission to cultivate an organic community garden in a formerly abandoned lot adjacent to the school. This demonstrates shared accountability for student success, resulting in a high level of commitment to school goals.
 - The school has strong partnerships with outside organizations that have a positive impact on students’ social, emotional and academic development.
 - The school’s guidance counselor share strategies and provide workshops that support the professional development needs of teachers so that they are better prepared to service challenging students. Additionally, partnerships such as focused collaborations with Barnard College and the Jewish Community Center align well with other school-based supports throughout the school day to meet students’ social/emotional needs in a cohesive manner. Partners also meet students’ needs by providing moral development and counseling, as well as help parents access health services. Consequently, services are deeply embedded and well integrated in school culture and directly impact students’ social-emotional growth as noted in the low referral rate to citywide children’s services.
 - The school effectively uses observations and other teacher data to improve teacher practice and student outcomes.
 - Teachers benefit from inter-visitations and professional development provided by contracted consultants both on and off site. New teachers have assigned mentors to help them develop their pedagogical skills. Additionally, targeted coaching helps selected teachers develop an individual growth plan. As a result, the knowledge base of several teachers is swiftly developing, leading to grade appropriate strategies that support student understanding. Most teachers across grades utilize the workshop model with mini lesson, work and share time as the framework for learning across content areas. Students engage in hands-on, inquiry-based, exploratory science lessons that allow them to problem solve and apply their learning to new situations. This results in increased levels of student engagement and enjoyment of learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Expand the use of data analysis to regularly evaluate and revise as needed processes and programs within the school that lead to effective professional collaborations.
 - Although teacher teams set goals and track student progress, school leaders are now instituting coherent and aligned systems across all teams that continually monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the teachers' collaborations. As a result, teams are at the beginning stages of sharing best practices, deepening coherence between the written curriculum, assessments and instructional practices.
 - An established facilitator leads each team meeting. Teams are teacher- led and some teachers facilitate on a rotational basis. However, teacher leaders are not yet receiving sufficient support to develop their own skills as facilitators of adult learning. Consequently, teachers have not cemented the expertise that allows them to reflect collectively on each other's facilitation techniques to further support their personal and collective growth.
- Deepen inquiry work across teacher teams so that staff share and analyze student progress and positively impact curricular and instructional decisions.
 - Teacher teams regularly review Acuity, common end of unit assessment data in English language arts and math, as well as students' independent reading levels during their weekly meetings. One team is focused on reviewing student work products but all teams have not adopted this practice as part of their meeting structure. Consequently, all teachers do not utilize differentiated strategies to support assessment design so that all students are suitably challenged.
- Develop coherence and rigor of instructional practices so that all students make progress through differentiated learning experiences.
 - While teaching strategies are differentiated and teachers employ varied groupings, some do not consistently develop extensions to challenge higher achieving students so that they apply learning to new situations and further accelerate their own progress, as evidenced by classroom instruction and student work products displayed on bulletin boards. Additionally, although teachers employ critical thinking strategies, some do not ask open-ended, higher order questions that lead to increased levels of student engagement. As such, classroom discussions which demand accountable conversations where students challenge and support each other's thinking is at the beginning stages of development and not yet the norm across grades and content areas.
- Refine the curriculum emphasizing rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills for a variety of learners with different needs.
 - Core staff members deliberately adjusted the curriculum in order to integrate the common core standards in English language arts and math units of study. The social studies and science curriculum is also aligned to state standards. However, projects and performance-based tasks that probe for deep understanding and application of learning is not yet the norm across all grade levels and content areas so that every student is suitably challenged and retention of content information is solidified.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: Henry Highland Garnet	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