

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

Henry David Thoreau

Elementary School 017

**28-37 29th Street
Queens
NY 11102**

Principal: Cynthia Dickman

**Dates of review: December 7-8, 2010
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Philip A. Composto**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Henry David Thoreau School is an elementary school with 670 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 9% Black, 53% Hispanic, 14% White, 2% multiracial, 21% Asian students and 1% other. The student body includes 32% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 95.1%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and teachers align curricula to key standards and offer a range of positive learning experiences that fully engage and support student learning.
 - The school's curriculum is aligned to State standards. School leaders and faculty are moving towards adopting The Common Core State Standards across subjects to align expectations across grades. Consequently, students benefit from a purposeful curriculum that has resulted in improved academic performance. This is evident in an increase in scores in the Instructionally Targeted Assessments (ITA).
 - Academic programs and learning tasks engage students in hands-on rigorous activities that emphasize critical thinking skills across subjects. For example, students conduct exciting Science experiments and expand their learning experiences through class field trips that integrate content areas. As a result, students participate in meaningful tasks that accelerate their learning.
- The principal makes positive organizational decisions that support school initiatives.
 - The school recognized Mathematics as an area of concern based on the Progress Report data. As a result, a Mathematics teacher provides targeted classes across grades with a focus on problem solving. School leaders also have hired a new coach this year to assist teachers in analyzing student data, planning for differentiated instruction and aligning instructional strategies to goals. Consequently, students have demonstrated gains in the Everyday Math assessments.
 - The school provides every student with the opportunity to use computers. This has engaged students in challenging academic tasks. Students work on an online reading program which helps them become active readers. The program is used daily across grades. Consequently, this has allowed students to select texts and activities that interest them. This program has also increased student fluency, vocabulary and comprehension as noted in running records and classroom assessments.
- The school provides varied professional development opportunities that deepen adult learning with a clear focus on improving classroom instruction.
 - Teachers participate in meaningful professional development activities to meet teachers' differentiated needs. Professional development topics are informed by feedback gathered from classroom observations, walkthroughs and teacher conversations. As a result, all teachers benefit from a good range of effective support on the development of their teaching skills. Also, all teachers are trained by Teachers College Reading and Writing Project consultants. Consequently, school leaders noted that students have begun to transfer the strategies taught throughout the Reading and Writing Workshop across all subject areas.
- School leaders and faculty consistently use a wide range of relevant data to establish a clear understanding of the performance and progress of individual and groups of students.

- The supervisory cabinet uses data from multiple sources such as ARIS, occurrence reports, attendance summaries and safety meetings to understand clearly the strengths and needs of the school. This has provided specific information about student academic achievement, attendance patterns, student suspensions and school incidents. For example, the attendance data assists the school in identifying individual students who are chronically absent. The school addresses these findings by assigning the guidance counselor to work with the youngsters. In addition, assembly programs and an incentive program are in place. As a result, attendance from September through present has improved.
- Teachers supplement English Language Arts, Mathematics, NYSESLAT, Science and Social Studies summative data with information generated from the item skills analysis and baseline assessments. Teachers use the data to group students according to their Reading and Mathematics levels. As a result, students' academic performance has increased on Everyday Math unit tests and on literacy assessments.
- A wide range of partnerships successfully promote students' personal development and academic growth so that students succeed in meeting their learning goals.
 - The school has a long standing partnership with New York Cares. Through the partnership, the school offers a range of experiential learning activities for students on Saturdays. These activities include yoga, environmental learning and explorations into healthy ways of living. The New York Cares partnership also supports the school with volunteers for an Early Bird Reading Program which pairs students up with members of the local community to read together. Consequently, students enjoy coming to school on weekends and the school has developed effective relationships with the community.
 - The guidance counselor and school administrators work closely with teachers to support their efforts in promoting positive student discipline. The school community strongly believes in values education and integrates rigorous value lessons. Therefore, students' social and emotional needs are addressed which has led to a decrease in fighting and suspensions.

What the school needs to improve

- Enhance the collaborative system to involve a broader range of staff in decision making and school planning through delegation and distributive leadership.
 - Teachers meet once a week with their grade teams and once a month with their Inquiry Teams. At these meetings, teachers share programmatic interventions and resources that they use with their six targeted students. Teachers expressed that meeting once a month was not sufficient time to look deeply at the data and to share curricular and instructional adjustments to improve student learning outcomes with their colleagues. Furthermore, the agendas for the Inquiry meetings are determined by the administration. School faculty do not create their own inquiry agendas, limiting the ownership of the work and the leadership potential for teachers. As a result, there is a missed opportunity to truly improve the learning outcomes for students on the grade level.
- Establish systems to evaluate teacher team effectiveness and to build leadership capacity

- School leaders and faculty inconsistently evaluate the work of teacher teams. Consequently, they are not effectively using data to assess the collaborative inquiry work across the school. As a result, the school's ability to provide feedback to target improvements in the work of teacher teams and build leadership capacity is limited.
- Increase consistency in differentiating instruction, based on formative and summative data, so that lessons constantly challenge all students at their level, to maximize their learning.
 - There are teachers who plan lessons and use appropriate scaffolds to differentiate instruction in response to students' performance and interests. However, this is not a consistent practice across all subjects and grades. As a result, lessons do not always challenge some students, particularly high performers, to their full potential and instruction does not always fully address their learning needs.
- Refine all goals so that they include precise short and long-term measurable outcomes to monitor students' progress effectively, and to reinforce ownership and accountability in all plans by instructional staff.
 - Teams of teachers and individual teachers use common Periodic Assessments as well as common classroom assessment tools to set annual goals for target groups of students. For example, the Kindergarten through Grade 5 teachers use annual goals from Teachers College and Everyday Math to improve Reading and Mathematics skills of their target students. However, the practice of setting precise, short-term measurable outcomes to track progress of student subgroups and targeted individuals is not consistent across all grades.
- Refine action planning to develop interim goals and benchmarks for all target groups so that progress is measured, adjustments made and success evaluated for all plans.
 - Classroom teachers are engaged in collaborative teams and work effectively to share instructional practice, analyze a wide range of data, and plan instruction to improve student learning outcomes. However, newly formed Data Teams are still developing their collaborative inquiry skills and evolving in their team roles. Consequently, teams and school leaders have not yet fully established long and short-term interim measures for their target groups.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: Henry David Thoreau	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
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