

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

Henry Gradstein

Elementary School 166

**33-09 35th Avenue
Queens
NY 11106**

Principal: Janet Farrell

Dates of review: April 5 - 6, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Dr. Philip A. Composto

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Henry Gradstein is an elementary school with 1103 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 5% Black, 48% Hispanic, 16% White, and 27% Asian, 1% multiracial and 3% other students. The student body includes 22% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 95.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The alignment of curriculum with teaching practices supports the school's belief system to differentiate instruction, which results in high student engagement and ownership of learning.
 - Teachers across classrooms and grades use data and their knowledge of students' strengths, needs and interests to group students for learning. Data generated from unit assessments and teacher made tests across subjects is reviewed regularly so that activities and student groups are adjusted based on learning outcomes. Lessons engage students across grades in advanced, on level and strategic intervention groups that provide effective scaffolds to improve their learning. As a result, classroom data shows improved achievement in reading and an increased volume and accuracy in writing across subjects, evident in student work folders, school bulletin boards and unit assessment results.
- The school's instructional program is well supported by standards-based curriculum that offers rigorous learning experiences, which lead to high levels of engagement for students across grades and subjects.
 - The school uses a multi-disciplinary approach to learning. Teachers in the fifth grade use visual and tactical approaches when teaching science and social studies. Cross-curriculum connections are made using the SMART board. For example, students have the opportunity to take a virtual field-trip to Philadelphia. They are able to build prior knowledge by visiting Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell. As a result, students are highly motivated and engaged in their learning.
 - Teacher created curriculum calendars and units of study effectively link lessons to the standards across grades and subjects. Teachers use computer assessments, consistently gather classroom tasks and group students across grades. As a result, students engage in challenging academic tasks and teachers provide individual support based on data which has led to improved learning outcomes as noted on monthly unit tests.
- The school makes strategic organizational decisions that support the school's instructional goals that meet the academic needs of the students.
 - This year, four special education classes have used the students' individualized educational program and classroom data to group them based on academic ability. Students are streamed for reading and math. Six certified special education teachers work with these groups of students. These highly effective organizational structures and creative use of resources are well aligned to the school's goals and focused on improving student learning outcomes as evident by teacher made tests.
 - The English as a second language teachers work with a target group of English language learners during the 37 ½ minute sessions to improve

their English language acquisition skills. Classroom teachers meet on a bi-weekly basis with the ESL teacher to discuss instructional strategies, plan units of study and use rubrics to evaluate the work of the target group. Consequently, the team of teachers hold themselves accountable for the progress of the target students and for meeting the school's goals in closing the achievement gap for English language learners as noted in improved scores on instructional targeted assessments.

- Individual teachers and teams of teachers wisely use a wide range of data to meet student needs and adjust instruction.
 - The principal places the improvement of instruction as her constant focus and supports individual teachers and teams to collaboratively create and analyze weekly and monthly assessments, in all subject areas. Teachers integrate higher order thinking skills into their literacy instruction because of these meetings. For example, all teachers and teams use a writing rubric to provide clear and rigorous expectations to students. A team uses on demand writing pieces and formative data to differentiate instruction for individual students resulting in increased writing volume evident in student work folders. School leaders enrich these efforts by meeting with all teams. These actions align instruction, build capacity and help create a clear picture of students' needs.
- The school's strong partnerships with a variety of organizations help the school meet the academic, social and emotional needs of students and build capacity that improve student achievement.
 - The school works with the Jacob Riis Community Based Organization that uses school data, which provides students with homework help, an opportunity to participate in recreational activities and a means for exploration. Consequently, students feel supported and enjoy coming to school and the school has developed effective relationships with the community.
 - The guidance counselors and school leaders work closely with teachers to support their efforts in promoting positive student discipline. For example, all classroom teachers were provided with the book, "Have You Filled A Bucket Today?" This heartwarming book encourages positive behavior as children see how rewarding it is to express daily kindness, appreciation and love. Therefore, students' social and emotional needs are addressed which has led to a decrease in suspensions.
- The school has established effective systems for monitoring classroom instruction with a clear focus that has resulted in improving instructional practices.
 - Classroom observations, walkthroughs, student work, meaningful conversations and assessments inform professional development offerings. As a result, a professional development plan was created to help improve teacher practice, enhance their professional growth and improve instruction.
 - Classroom teachers consistently use strategy lessons, and differentiated instruction. Classrooms reflect timely displays of literacy and math work.

Teachers use data binders and technology to improve instruction. This clear instructional focus and coherent school culture are supported by the faculty resulting in staff taking ownership and accountability for learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve the communication of academic progress and next learning steps with students and their families so that clarity of expectations will lead to acceleration of student learning.
 - The school provides students and families with interim individual progress reports which do not specify students' strengths or next learning steps. Some lower grade teachers provide feedback on student work. However, not all student work includes comments for improvement. Consequently, students cannot always clearly articulate what they need to do to guide their improvement and accelerate their learning. Additionally, parents do not have sufficient concrete information about their children's specific learning targets to support academic work at home and to fully participate in the improvement of student outcomes.
- Enhance goal setting for greater consistency in identifying short term goals targeted to meet the identified needs of individual and groups of students in order to increase learning outcomes.
 - Teacher teams use data to track student performance in meeting long term goals. However, some teachers do not consistently practice the setting of interim goals for their subgroups of English language learners and special needs students. This limits efforts to track progress and set differentiated tasks, extensions or additional supports to accelerate learning for these target groups of students.
- Expand and refine systems to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher teams and leadership development on improving student learning.
 - The school has some systems to evaluate the work of teacher teams and capacity building structures. For example, they review teacher focus student sheets and student data triangle sheets to monitor the progress of their work. However, limited feedback restricts the enhancement of the work of professional collaborations and structures such that distributed leadership fostering more reflective teaching practices is curtailed.
- Enhance systems for monitoring progress towards the achievement of long and short-term goals so that timely adjustments are made across the school to accelerate student learning.
 - The long-term plans for the development of the school are outlined in the Comprehensive Education Plan developed by the school leadership team. Additionally, the school monitors the performance of students at the end of each marking period and through interim progress reports. However, formalized practices, to determine the progress of improvement plans towards interim goals, are not fully embedded across all subjects. This limits the school's ability to consistently monitor progress in reaching goals for all student subgroups across all subject areas.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: The Henry Gradstein 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