

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**The Gil Hodges School**

**Elementary School K193**

**2515 Avenue L  
Brooklyn  
NY 11210**

**Principal: Frank Cimino**

**Dates of review: November 14 & 16, 2011**

**Lead Reviewer: Ronald Feinstein**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Gil Hodges School is an elementary school with 814 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 52% Black, 14% Hispanic, 17% White and 16% Asian students. The student body includes 14% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 94.0%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Teams of teachers and individuals use assessment data to strengthen collaboratively developed instructional practices in order to address current varied levels of performance and progress. (2.2)
  - School-created assessments and rubrics for writing and an item skills analysis in mathematics align to the school's instructional goals as described in the Comprehensive Educational Plan. These assessments provide feedback to teachers on the effectiveness of their instruction, revealing which practices positively impact students' reading, writing and math skills. Teacher teams design pre-assessments that are administered to all students and serve as a benchmark in literacy and mathematics. The results of these assessments are analyzed and inform adjustments to curricula and instruction, leading to positive student performance gains in math, writing and English language arts goals. Teachers supplement summative data with periodic assessments from a range of instruments such as Fountas and Pinnell, guided reading conference notes, end of unit data from Everyday Math and Math in Focus as well as student class notebooks. Together, these enable teachers to identify needs and strengths of student sub-groups and adjust instructional decisions.
- Teacher development is driven through a blended model using components from several research-based frameworks to ensure that teachers meet professional expectations. (4.1)
  - School leaders carry out frequent, short visits to classrooms and then provide feedback and next steps to teachers through emails, hand-written notes and more formal written protocols and analysis of classroom data. This feedback helps teachers implement reflective strategies that support teacher development, as evidenced by completed feedback loops that include teachers' comments to the principal.
  - Feedback to teachers is framed through a blend of research-based models. Teachers, with administrators, collaboratively set goals in an Individual Professional Development Plan, developed by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, which includes a timeline and connection to teaching assignment. This plan sets clear expectations for teacher practice framed in the effective practices from the California Standards for the Teaching Profession, the Principles of Learning, and Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching.
- Teachers and coaches use collaborative and data-informed processes for planning and goal setting in content areas for individuals and student sub-groups, leading to an understanding of students' path to mastery. (3.2)
  - The analysis of Progress Report data led teacher teams to develop classroom level goals that led to an increase of dedicated time for guided reading to twice a day as well as an increase in non-fiction reading. In mathematics classrooms, teachers were uncomfortable with a push to

accelerate students and thus leveraged changes in classroom practice to focus on not rushing through content.

- Teacher teams have cohort action plans that identify students needing additional support, list the targeted skills to be addressed and set goals for these students, with a focus on the lowest third in mathematics and literacy, including English language learners and special education students. While the school's overall growth remains almost level, this concentrated effort has resulted in narrowing the gap between these sub-groups and their classmates to approximately one percentage point in adjusted median growth percentiles for both groups in math and literacy.
- The school has effective reciprocal communication systems for keeping parents informed of school activities and student progress, resulting in families engaged in decision-making and school events. (2.4)
  - A school-specific progress report is sent to families mid-way through each semester and assesses students' academic performance and social-emotional development, as well as a narrative for each child. Students keep daily planners that parents are encouraged to use as a tool for communicating with teachers. Parents are especially appreciative that comments on students' planners are read and noted by teachers. This strategy for continually sharing performance outcomes results in parents being active, informed partners in their children's education.
  - The Parent Association raised funds to purchase the planners that contribute to reciprocal discussions regarding student progress, and they have also been involved in decisions to continue the school's emphasis on the arts and science. For example, parents actively support continuing the school's science cluster program where 97% of fourth grade students' achieve at level 3 or higher on the State science assessment.
- School leaders and staff convey high expectations and provide actionable feedback about student progress, which helps families to be key partners in their child's education. (3.4)
  - School leaders provide opportunities for staff to reflect in writing on their growing understanding of the school's common teaching framework. This results in targeted professional development that has been informed by collaborative discussions, is evaluated and moderated by colleagues and contributes to activities and assignments that promote student learning. The school's feedback loop from administrators to teachers and then back again to administrators provides the guidelines for accountability and how adjustments are communicated to the school community.
  - Staff communicate comprehensive comments to families through regular report cards that include a narrative that explains students' current reading level, suggestions for questioning during at-home reading, as well as suggestions for math practice and specific writing skills. Parents state they are appreciative of these supports and believe they are preparing their children for their next academic level.

## **What the school needs to improve**

- Ensure that modifications to existing curriculum include the school's chosen key state standards so that Common Core Learning tasks are an integral part of an implemented plan in all grades. (1.1)
  - The school has identified key standards in reading and writing and mathematics and begun to integrate the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) in literacy currently and has plans for mathematics in the spring. However, the school has not yet developed coherent curricula to effectively close the achievement gap and promote post-secondary readiness, thus hindering opportunities for students' academic growth.
  - While the staff has discussed Webb's Depth of Knowledge and classrooms display charts of Bloom's Taxonomy, classroom visits provide evidence only of active engagement. Teaching practice is inconsistent in challenging and engaging students at the higher levels of cognitive engagement. As a result, students are engaged for activity's sake rather than in the service of rigorous habits of mind, and opportunities for higher-level thinking and academic challenge are being missed.
- Promote consistency in differentiated instruction and purposeful grouping and provide challenging tasks to students to ensure that teacher's questioning extends thinking and provokes discussions to maximize learning. (1.2)
  - The school has an articulated set of beliefs about how children learn best that includes the workshop model, asking questions, using models and manipulatives in mathematics and group work. However, teaching practices in classrooms visited provide limited supports and entry points and are inconsistently differentiated, limiting opportunities for all learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities, to achieve at their highest potential. In addition, while students are generally engaged, they are provided few opportunities to be cognitively challenged in rigorous academic tasks. This limits each student's ability to produce high quality work products and participate in productive discussions.
- Develop a strategic plan that ensures the school's instructional goals are served by all organizational decisions and result in improved instruction and meaningful student work products. (1.3)
  - The principal has made an extensive array of decisions such as incorporating learning centers and Smartboards in most classrooms, hiring additional aides and extra math support, the purchase of several commercial programs to further support learning including Reading A-Z and Raz Kids, Credo Support, and FOSS Science to name a few. However, the strategic use of these components is not yet evident in support for the school's instructional goals and they have not yet yielded a positive impact on student performance or work products.
  - Teacher teams meet regularly but their efforts have not served to further engage students in challenging and rigorous tasks or classroom activities, resulting in missed opportunities for teaching practice to lead to improved student outcomes and meaningful student work products.

- Enhance the alignment of the year-long professional development plan with whole-school and individual teacher goals, ensuring that rigorous monitoring procedures are evident to evaluate the impact on student achievement. (4.3)
  - Professional learning at the school this year centered around three main foci: studying student work, observing classroom practice and understanding Danielson's Framework for Teaching more deeply. While the work clearly includes a plan to involve all students in CCLS literacy and math tasks, the work in literacy thus far is not consistently differentiated to improve learning, thus limiting teachers' understanding of how to improve learning outcomes.
  - School leaders provide professional learning opportunities for staff as well as network supports for math and literacy. The analysis of student work and use of specific protocols has been a focus; however teacher teams observed did not incorporate the protocols in their work even though the protocol was in hand. Therefore, a deeper understanding of the link between student work and teacher practice is lost and intended improvements are not yet apparent in classrooms.
- Extend the opportunities to evaluate progress toward defined goals and make adjustments through regular and formalized interim checks with particular attention to the rigorous demands of the CCLS. (5.1)
  - School leaders and faculty have started a review of curriculum maps and are working on different content areas in teams through the lens of the CCLS and Universal Design for Learning. In November, March and April the school provides a progress report; the November data is used to evaluate and adjust curriculum with an eye towards the evolving state standards. At the time of the review the first round of all literacy tasks were to be administered and analyzed in early December. Since the tasks were administered in all grades within the same time span, teachers' flexibility in scheduling developmentally appropriate pacing and articulating a coherent rationale thoughtfully aligned to curriculum maps and literacy progressions is limited, as is teachers' ability to carefully assess students' learning needs as defined by the CCLS.
  - School leaders are developing structures to evaluate organizational resources in response to students' needs and the expectations of the CCLS. For example, the accountability overview report identified students with disabilities and school leadership responded by dedicating a seasoned teacher to support these students three periods a week. Likewise, the Developmental Reading Assessment is scheduled to be administered to struggling kindergarteners in December, with results helping to assess the impact of organizational decisions. While the analysis of the literacy tasks may be timely enough to respond to student learning needs, the math tasks in some grades will require that students repeat content already taught, thereby diminishing the rationale for administering a CCLS-aligned culminating task and limiting the impact the expectations of the Common Core for the learning needs required for teachers that ensure coherence of policies and school-wide practices.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

<b>School name: The Gil Hodges School K193</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
<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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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 as evidenced by meaningful student work products?		<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>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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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 Align assessments to curriculum, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			<b>X</b>	
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?			<b>X</b>	
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students progress toward school and class expectations?			<b>X</b>	
<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.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			<b>X</b>	
3.4 Communicate high expectations to staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?			<b>X</b>	

<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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?			<b>X</b>				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			<b>X</b>				
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?		<b>X</b>					
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, guidance/advisement support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			<b>X</b>				
<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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, with particular attention to the CCLS?		<b>X</b>					
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?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			<b>X</b>				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>