

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Hamilton Heights School

Elementary School 368

**508 West 153rd Street
New York
NY 10031**

Principal: Nicky Kram Rosen

Dates of review: October 26-27, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Lori Bennett

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Hamilton Heights is an elementary school with 250 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 29% Black, 56% Hispanic, 8% White, 4% Asian students and 3% other students. The student body includes 21% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 94.6%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's resource and programmatic decisions support the school's instructional goals, thus promoting improvement in student and adult learning. (1.3)
 - In an effort to support the school's goal of using content area instruction to strengthen writing across the school, the principal purchased new technology devices for every classroom and created a full-time science cluster teacher position. All students are now programmed for inquiry-based science and are required to maintain science notebooks to capture their learning from virtual and hands-on inquiry experiences. As a result, students are beginning to have a better understanding of the concepts and skills being taught in science and use their science knowledge to produce scientific writing, such as lab reports and self-reflections; thus providing opportunities to support writing proficiency in all content areas.
 - All teachers are programmed to meet with their grade team once a week. In support of the school's instructional goal, teachers are now scheduled to meet across grades an additional period a week. This serves as a structure to enhanced communication between and amongst teachers relating to planning instruction and developing tasks that increase engagement and level of challenge for students.
- The school is a nurturing place that is organized to supports respectful interactions resulting in an environment conducive for student and adult learning. (1.4)
 - The reconfiguration of existing spaces throughout the school provides students specialized quiet areas for small group projects, within the classroom, research areas furnished with resources, and dedicated space for academic intervention services maximizes venues for learning for students. Students report that they don't distract one another when they are working in their special spaces; they know "...the space and children using the space [have] to be treated with respect." In addition, the repurposing of existing rooms now provides parents and teachers dedicated learning spaces. These changes have increased visits by parent to the building presence in the building and center and teacher professional development room are welcomed by the entire school community as an opportunity to engage the whole community in learning experiences that move the school forward.
 - The school engages students and families in a variety of activities, such as Family Movie Night, weekly sing-along, homework help, and enrichment clubs facilitated by teachers from the school and outside community members. These activities ensure that students' academic and social-emotional needs are known by caring adults. Students are enthusiastic about their school and agree that the school is "...a great place,...we know each other and we're like family."

- Data-based goals reflect a common understanding by the school community thereby ensuring collaborative efforts to guide school-wide improvements. (3.1)
 - The school's goals are derived from the analysis of performance data, such as the NY State exam and NYC Predictive assessment results. At school-wide meetings and retreats, teachers and staff engage in further identification of the school's strengths and areas for growth. Consequently, these ratified goals represent the school community's belief, including parents, of the school's "...next steps toward advancing student achievement and teacher development."
- All teachers benefit from structured collaborations that promote leadership opportunities leading to elevated teacher practice and increase student outcomes. (4.2)
 - Teachers across all grades meet on inquiry teams to examine student work, analyze current curricular tasks, and understand the specific grade level expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards. With a focus on improving the writing skills of English language learners, teachers identify and share instructional strategies to support identified gaps. As a result of these structured collaborations, all teachers now engage in a more clearly articulated process for identifying student learning needs, and assessing the impact of instructional supports for addressing those needs.
 - A cross-grade planning team meets once a week to analyze tasks and share instructional practices and resources. A newly implemented rotation schedule, used within the team meeting structure, provides each teacher an opportunity to take the lead in facilitating these meeting. As a result, an increased number of teachers are taking more of an active role in ongoing decisions that impact their practice and student learning.
- Teacher learning experiences and school partnerships ensures a safe and inclusive culture that supports students' academic and social-emotional needs. (4.4)

The school's external partnership with the Northeast Foundation for Children provides teachers and staff with professional development experiences that support the Responsive Classroom program, a school-wide initiative that emphasizes the interconnectedness between social, emotional and academic growth of students. Training and implementation focuses on the appropriate behaviors that are needed to engage in successful cooperative learning experiences. Teachers and staff are trained in ten classroom practices, such as interactive modeling, positive language, and academic choice, among others. These result ensure increases in levels of student engagement and academic progress within a safe, respectful and inclusive school community.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that curriculum and academic tasks are refined so that they consistently promote higher levels of thinking and cognitively engage all students. (1.1)
 - The school is beginning the work of refining its curricular units so that they better align to the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards. However, there is little evidence that the revisions are based on student data and include tasks that require higher levels of thinking, across grades and subjects. Consequently, all students, across the school, do not yet engage in cognitively demanding learning experiences that elevate their thinking and move them to higher levels of performance.

- Ensure the consistency of targeted instruction across classrooms so that instructional decisions include purposeful groupings, challenging tasks and questioning to extend thinking and to maximize learning. (1.2)
 - Instructional practices support the school's curriculum and philosophy, and are evident in small and large group instruction. While a few teachers show understanding of tailoring instruction beyond the practice of ability grouping, most teachers observed were challenged to deliver targeted instruction. As a result, students' individual instructional needs are inadequately supported, thus inhibiting all students from reaching higher levels of achievement.

- Develop a system to ensure that all teachers know their students' strengths, areas for growth and progress, on a consistent basis, in order to provide targeted instruction that meets the needs of all students. (2.2)
 - Teachers review summative and periodic assessment data and exam student work. This data is used to determine guided groups and how well student work aligns with the lesson and instructional objectives. However, the data analyzed does not yet identified the specific skills and concepts students know and don't know within those guided groups. As a result, teachers are not yet able to provide targeted instruction to address the students' identified gap areas, thus limiting the growth of all groups of students.
 - While some teachers ask students questions during whole and guided group instruction and use responses to guide their next steps, that practice is not consistent across the school. In addition, students are not yet engaged in self-assessments which enables teachers to intervene to address deficit areas, thereby limiting teachers' abilities to make instructional adjustments in order to meet the learning needs of all students.

- Establish a feedback system to teachers, aligned to an agreed upon research-based framework, that guides professional development in order to promote pedagogical growth. (4.1)
 - The newly appointed principal has engaged in some class visits and provided feedback to teachers related to a variety of instructional areas. However, feedback to teachers is not yet anchored to a research-based framework. This limits teacher ability to make modifications to their practice, base on targeted feedback, in order to improve student

outcomes. In addition, the school has professional development plans to support teacher pedagogy. At this time, teachers receive training from outside vendors, administration, the network team and other teachers on a variety of topics, including literacy strategies to increase student outcomes and unpacking the Common Core aligned academic tasks. However, the topics for learning opportunities and frequency of support of individual and groups of teachers are not yet grounded in the evidence surfaced from classroom visits. As a result, teacher development to accelerate student growth is limited.

- Expand the system for evaluating and adjusting assessment practices to ensure the school utilizes and communicate meaningful information. (5.2)
 - The school has determined the need to adjust school-wide grading practices, and is utilizing the vertical planning team to begin this work. However, there is not yet a structure or process in place to evaluate the practice of aggregating and sharing summative and periodic school and student data to ensure a coherent effort by all members of the school community. This prevents school leaders and staff from knowing what information will be most beneficial for parents in understanding their children's levels of performance, thus limiting their ability to support them at home.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Hamilton Heights School PS 368	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 as evidenced by meaningful student work products?		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, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?		X		
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?		X		
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students progress toward school and class expectations?		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 staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?		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, 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?			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, with particular attention to the CCLS?		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