

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Langston Hughes School

Elementary School 233

9301 Avenue B

Brooklyn

NY 11236

Principal: Denean Stephens-Spellman

Dates of review: April 29 - 30, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Beverly A. Wilkins

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Langston Hughes is an elementary school with 617 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 96% Black, 2% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 94.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Rigorous curricula and instructional tasks provide access to high-level critical thinking and problem solving skills leading to opportunities to narrow gaps in student achievement. (1.1)
 - The school is deepening the work of curriculum mapping through the exploration of instructional shifts aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), Citywide Instructional Expectations, and adaption of CCLS units of study. Thus, units of study incorporate rigorous standards to promote student engagement in higher order thinking skills in English language arts, math, and social studies across grades. The integration of aligned tasks require students to infuse text-based information in their writing, utilize close read strategies for multiple purposes, and demonstrate content and process applications in math. Consequently, the development of curricula matched with anchor Reading and Writing Standards 1 and 2 affords students opportunities to gain appropriate content knowledge and necessary skills toward closing learning gaps in anticipation of college and career readiness.
 - This year, the school focused on an in-depth curriculum development project that increased the complexity of thinking for teachers and students. Therefore, teachers work to elevate written curriculum as evidenced in units of study leading to all students being engaged in grade-level standards-based learning. Teachers of students in integrated collaborative team teaching and self-contained classrooms provide small group instruction, and students' acquisition of skills is aided by access to technology supports. As noted during a special education teacher team meeting, the focus on individual and subgroup engagements required students to read a balance of fiction and nonfiction texts and also engage in math fluency activities utilizing the *Go Math* program, thus allowing students to have access to robust learning experiences that promote higher order skills.
- School leaders and teacher convey high expectations for learning reflected in coherent and targeted communication systems.(3.4)
 - School leaders' use of various forums such as faculty conferences; Chancellor's professional development days; data team meetings; and informal and formal observations, creates a culture for learning. As a result, more than 95% of teachers and parents agree that the school has high expectations for children as indicated by their responses to the 2011 Learning Environment Survey. The school's practice of providing written feedback to students on their assignments facilitates their understanding of how to improve end-work products and their knowing next steps in applications of skills, and this connection to rubric-based comments is evident in corridor and classroom displays. Similarly, parents receive progress reports based on student assessment performance and learning benchmarks. Therefore, established communication systems ensure teachers, parents, and students receive targeted feedback in support of high standards toward academic achievement.

- Effective management of fiscal resources, teacher collaborations, and use of student time, engenders meaningful learning experiences for adults and students. (1.3)
 - Careful decision-making includes well thought-out classroom and cluster assignments, scheduling of double periods of English language arts and math instruction three days each week, use of discretionary funds to increase classroom technology, and integration of the 37.5 minute extended learning time into the regular school day. Thus, the effective management of fiscal and human resources leads to students having more time on tasks with tailored instruction. The principal reports student performance on benchmark assessments indicates the school is on track to meeting the annual goal of a 10% increase in the number of students with disabilities and English language learners who demonstrate progress on New York State standardized tests.
 - Reorganization allowing for out of classroom teachers such as the literacy and math coach positions ensures class-level support for identified subgroups and school wide goals. A reading teacher and the English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher provide support to classroom teachers, which advances learning for teachers. Additionally, students' Intervention services occur throughout the school day ramping up Tier I and enrichment instruction for a diverse group of learners. Further, the school conducts a Saturday Academy designed to provide additional tutoring for students with disabilities and English language learners in upper grades. Hence, the forming of a Response to Intervention Team and Special Education Committee cultivated shared responsibility for the success of lower performing students. As a result, there has been a decrease in special education referrals and a strengthening of Tier III responses to individual educational plan learning goals.

What the school needs to improve

- Systematize structures to effectively evaluate whole school learning trends, value of instructional programs, and impact of organizational decisions, so that timely adjustments further student progress and performance. (5.1)
 - The principal and assistant principal periodically examine student work and assess artifacts of learning based on rubrics and CCLS standards to determine the effectiveness of school wide curricular decisions and teacher practice. However, a system is not in place to make comparative assessments of the rigor and challenge for students in particular classrooms and programs, which limits the school's ability to evaluate the efficacy of classroom instruction, academic programs, and intervention services relative to students' needs. The lack of an ongoing system for collecting data on the effectiveness of teaching and organizational decisions impede developing a clear picture of instructional coherence, limits the school's capacity to make timely organizational adjustments linked to student outcomes, and thereby impacts CCLS instructional expectations.

- Strengthen teacher questioning techniques and facilitation of discussion to support consistent alignment to the school's instructional focus toward increased academic outcomes. (1.2)
 - As a school community, administrators and teachers articulate the belief that accountable talk, the use of Webb's Depth of Knowledge Matrix to differentiate higher order questions, and student-to-student discourse promotes content learning and deeper understanding of concepts. To this end, there is a school-wide focus on questioning and discussion techniques to assist teachers in strengthening and refining their current pedagogical practices to improve higher critical thinking skills for all learners. Accordingly, in some classrooms activities reflect a commitment to these beliefs. For example, instructional practices in a kindergarten classroom support young learners in the development of accountable talk habits through the teacher's use of questioning techniques that instigate student-to-student conversations and promote active listening resulting in students reporting, extending, and evaluating each other ideas and posing wonderings about features and content of informational text. Likewise, during a classroom visit, fourth grade students engaged in a teacher-facilitated discussion about author's perspective. Consequently, the students engaged in accountable talk using stems to develop their conversation. Nevertheless, this is not an entrenched practice across classrooms, which precludes rich discussions that appropriately engage all students in their learning. Additionally, students struggle to understand ELA and math tasks as evidenced during classroom visits. As a result, uneven opportunities for students to activate high-level thinking and actively participate during lessons hinder increased academic outcomes for all students.

- Ensure teacher planning and delivery of lessons include an analysis of gleaned data to meet the needs of all students. (2.2)
 - During regular common planning sessions, teachers use data-informed and collaborative processes to discuss results of summative and periodic assessments in order to make decisions based on individual needs of identified groups of students. However, planning documents reviewed and instruction observed lacked transparent and consistent approaches to adjustments in curriculum and instruction based on their analysis.
 - Some teachers use conference notes to record student performance and set learning goals in the midst of instruction. In addition, fifth grade students report they engage in peer conferences to speak with classmates about their work and make necessary revisions. They also report that their teachers use rubrics to check their work and give them a grade. Nevertheless, students do not use rubrics to improve and measure the quality of their work against standard criteria prior to submitting the assignment for teacher review. Therefore, the absence of this use for rubric-based assessment among students hampers self-reflection and self-assessment, which further impacts teachers' ability to make needed adjustments to support student mastery.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Langston Hughes School	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score		X					
Instructional Core							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, including the arts, physical and health education, 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 that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to curricula, engaging and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?		X					
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels?		X					
School Culture							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X				
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?			X				
Systems for Improvement							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet students' learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			X				
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework 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				
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?		X					
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed