

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Harriet Tubman

Elementary School 154

250 West 127 Street

New York

NY 10027

Principal: Elizabeth Jarrett

Dates of review: May 13 – 14, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Gale Reeves

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Harriet Tubman is an elementary school with 320 students from prekindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 61% Black, 36% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 18% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 92.4%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school creates an environment that is highly conducive to learning promoting students' social, academic, emotional, and physical well-being. (1.4)
 - Academic and social achievements are rewarded during school assemblies and celebrated on hallway bulletin boards. Parents state that they are kept “fully informed” and that their children thrive in the school’s “happy” environment. The school is in its third year of embracing a school-based Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) system that is well integrated throughout the school and helps to foster the development of an inclusive and respectful school tone. On a daily basis, students are rewarded for exhibiting specific traits that are introduced monthly and reinforced daily in classrooms, such as self-control during May, perseverance in April, while in September the trait of leadership was emphasized. Thus, students exhibiting specific traits through their actions are nominated by staff and acknowledged on a public VIP bulletin board. Additionally, students acknowledge peer-to-peer positive behaviors and character traits and are eager to earn and accumulate points, which they exchange for self-selected merchandise in the school store. School leaders and students note that students continue to serve on the school’s nutrition committee and provide feedback on specific menu choices. For example, students suggested “Meatless Mondays” as one way to reduce their reliance on red meat in their daily diets. These efforts foster a deepening of students’ leadership skills, improved relations between students and staff, and a noted reduction of incident reports and suspension rates, thus enabling students to value differences and learn in an inclusive environment that is conducive to their needs.
 - The school-wide student-to-teacher ratio, which is approximately 12:1, enables every student to be well known by school faculty who help support academic growth with tutoring and small group intervention strategies. The attendance team meets every Tuesday to review attendance and guidance reports in order to note trends and areas of need. A monthly breakfast, held for students and families with a 95% or higher attendance rate, and school personnel’s frequent “shout outs” over the public announcement system, acknowledge individual efforts of perfect or improved attendance. Outreach efforts include phone calls and home visits and as a result, there were no 407’s necessitating attendance investigation generated for the past few months. Additionally, this data analysis informs plans and coordinates well with added supports that include: NYU Women of Excellence who sponsor a single sex mentoring program for girls; the Apollo Theater Oral History Program helping students learn about significant leaders in Harlem; Verizon which provides academic and mentoring supports to grades 3 through 5 students; and Community Works that supports an afterschool arts program, as well as a myriad of other community partnerships. Additionally, the school’s emphasis on health and fitness has earned it the School Wellness gold award for the past three years. These efforts result in an increase in students’ appreciation of the arts, parent participation in school-wide events, an increase in the monthly and annual attendance rates, and increased motivational levels as noted in student and parent meetings.

- School leaders develop and share clearly articulated goals with the school community to support social-emotional growth and foster student learning. (3.1)
 - The principal's performance objectives and school goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) are focused on improving literacy and numeracy skills for all students. Goals specifically address exposing students to Common Core aligned tasks across content areas with an emphasis on supporting special populations such as English language learners and students with disabilities. This school year, the principal also emphasized a focus on professional development in order to refine teaching practices with the ultimate goal of increasing student outcomes. These comprehensive goals align well with school level action plans. Additionally, the principal and cabinet members plan for the school year by reviewing historical outcomes from State assessment data as well as feedback from the Quality Review and the results of the School Survey and Progress Report. Cabinet members track goals leading to timely adjustments that included the redesign of the afterschool targeted intervention periods and academic tutoring for the most struggling students during the school day to address students' social-emotional and academic needs.
 - School goals are informed by an end-of-year survey completed by staff as well as collaborative input from members of the school leadership team (SLT) who help shape the school's goals. These goals, shared with teachers and families during staff and parent association meetings, enable the school community to be cognizant of and embrace the school's plan for student improvement. Teachers set professional goals for themselves; at the upper-grade level, students write their own broad learning goals, post them on their desks, and are encouraged to be accountable for their own learning. As such, there is a shared accountability and commitment to needed improvements relative to the increase in the number of students performing at proficiency levels.
- The principal has begun prioritizing the use of resources and is making strategic decisions to support the school's goals and improve student outcomes. (1.3)
 - Although there is no longer an official iZone program this school year, the principal continued the iZone initiative internally and expanded it as a support for all students, thus enabling them to work on computer generated activities. Smart boards and interactive white boards are available in classrooms and teachers continue to receive professional development on the use of these tools. As such, teachers are continuing to develop their ability to make further instructional adjustments such as displaying pictures and downloading resources to build vocabulary understanding and support students' learning needs. Although the math coach position was eliminated for school year 2012-13 due to budgetary constraints, staff continues to receive intermittent support from an AUSSIE consultant, professional development from Teachers' College, as well as other community partners, which is becoming aligned with school goals. Students in grades 3 through 5 are homogeneously regrouped for 90 minutes each day during the literacy block so that teachers are better able to focus on similar learning needs. Such, resources are beginning to impact student learning as noted in student work folders.
 - The hiring committee comprised of school leaders and teachers, interviews and then observes prospective candidates modeling lessons prior to being hired. School wide literacy block and math skills periods, built into the schedule, encourages teachers to begin to thoughtfully address students' needs. Additionally, the individual education plan (IEP) teacher provides small group tutorials two times each week, and this year, the 37.5 extended day program has changed to two 50-

minute blocks on Tuesdays and Wednesdays in order to more closely address students' instructional needs. The recently hired special education coach tutors a small group of students as well as provides direct professional support to individual teachers so that they better address the mandates for students with disabilities. As a result, alignment across systems and structures to address the needs of varied groups of students are presently developing.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve instructional practices across classrooms to ensure that diverse students are consistently provided with multiple entry points and challenging tasks enabling them to demonstrate higher order thinking skills. (1.2)
 - Some teachers prepare lessons that target the specific needs and strengths of students and employ strategies that address a range of student ability levels. This, however, is not the practice in every class. For example, in one class although the focus of the lesson was on questioning the text, the teacher dominated the lesson with a lecture format and after 20 minutes of frontal teaching, did not introduce specific reading strategies and questioning techniques that would enable students to navigate the text. Consequently, the lesson was dominated with a number of low-level literal questions requiring students to recall basic facts and not all students receive the academic support necessary to accelerate their learning. Additionally, although students sit in groups, teachers do not always use formative data to make assignments or to develop appropriately challenging tasks for individual or small groups of students. Most teachers do not yet plan lessons that allow for sufficient student engagement in higher order thinking and in most classrooms students are all asked to complete the same tasks. As a result, meaningful work products that demonstrate activities that stretch the thinking of all learners including English language learners, students with individual education plans, and those performing at the highest achievement levels are not yet evident school wide.
 - Teachers are beginning to employ open-ended questions to spark discussions and students in some classrooms are questioning each other's assumptions and ideas. For example in a self-contained special education classroom students were assigned specific roles as they worked in teams to identify patterns in math. Students excitedly made predictions, persisted in the face of difficulty, defended their answers, and built on each other's thoughts and ideas. However, this is not consistent, as in many classrooms questions and answers are most often between teacher and an individual student. Consequently, thought-provoking questions, conversations that give students the chance to support their views with evidence, change their minds, and use questions as a way to learn more, are not yet the norm across classrooms and grades.
- Promote greater reliability in the alignment of assessment practices to standards and tasks so that teachers can gauge student learning outcomes and the effectiveness of their curricula and instructional learning. (2.2)
 - Some teachers use rubrics to provide written feedback to students but this is not a consistent practice across the school. Data tracking charts are displayed in classrooms and teachers use data from common grade- level assessments including Accelerated Math and Star Reading, Acuity, and Fountas and Pinnel running records, to set targets and track student growth. Grade level teams are at the infancy stages of integrating Common Core bundles into their units of study. During planning meetings, teachers were exposed to utilizing protocols to analyze

student work products. Thus far, their approach is limited to identifying the needs of individual students and some teachers are not utilizing the data to make immediate instructional adaptations. While some teachers track results, others do not yet systematically review the data on their tracking charts. As a result, all teachers are not consistently using the data to make needed changes to the curriculum, student groupings, and their instructional practices.

- In one fourth-grade classroom the teacher reviews exit slips on a regular basis to assess student understanding of prior lessons. She then uses this information to inform the following day's lesson and thoughtfully reteaches in order to address students' misunderstandings. The teacher utilized varied strategies and technological tools including the Smart board to help reinforce conceptual understanding. This level of checking for student understanding, however, is not the norm across grades and classrooms. Additionally, although teachers repeatedly ask questions, many do not analyze student responses as a check for understanding. This hinders teachers' ability to make timely and effective adjustments so that students receive daily feedback and are able to master concepts and further their own learning.
- Further refine the development of the curriculum to reflect alignment with key standards and Common Core learning tasks to increase rigor and cognitively engage all learners. (1.1)
 - Although academic tasks at times emphasize higher order thinking skills such as the real world application when students built bridges to solidify their conceptual understanding during the math unit on measurement and decimals, many activities are not consistently rigorous enough to challenge students performing at the varied ability levels. School leaders and staff embrace the support from consultants and network team members to help make changes to the curricula to integrate CCLS into English language arts and math units of study. Teacher teams continue to make further adjustments in their unit planning to ensure a better balance between informational and literary texts across a range of disciplines. Yet, in some classrooms, reading skills such as sequencing or the use figurative language are taught in isolation and students do not sufficiently apply taught strategies to help them understand the text. Additionally, students do not always experience full immersion in a unit of study, which requires them to read multiple pieces of literature and understand varied perspectives. Students are at times asked to draft essays after exposure to only one or two pieces of text. As a result, text are not always sequenced to build knowledge about specific topics and subjects, leading to tasks that are not adequately challenging for the grade, and resulting in an achievement gap across multiple class and grade levels.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Harriet Tubman	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