

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Horace Harding Elementary School

28Q206

**61-21 97th Place
Rego Park, N.Y. 11374**

Principal: Joan Thomas

**Dates of review: November 27-28, 2012
Lead Reviewer: Beverly Ffolkes-Bryant, Ed.D**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Horace Harding is an elementary school with 617 students from prekindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 21% Black, 32% Hispanic, 28% White, and 17% Asian students. The student body includes 22% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 94.1%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Students benefit from a standards-based, broad curriculum that utilizes with multiple resources, in order to support learning by all students. (1.1)
 - In June, with the support of the Network team, teachers analyzed the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) tasks they had given to students during the 2011-2012 school year. Teachers used a rubric to see how rigorous the tasks were and used a reflection sheet to record their evaluations of the performance task, the planning, the resources that they used, the pacing and the scaffolding. Since tasks planned and analyzed were at Level 2, teachers are now revising and redesigning the units to meet the criteria of a Level 3 or above. Teachers are also looking deeply into the instructional shifts of the Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE) to develop congruency, as evident in classroom visits in which task-related student work demonstrated carefully designed tasks that focus on the targeted Common Core standards. In these classes, rubrics were used uniformly, with effective teacher feedback on all student products, revealing congruence in the delivery of instruction.
 - After noticing that the students with disabilities, particularly the emotionally disturbed students, were especially challenging to engage, administration directed teachers to use the Pre-Referral Intervention Manual and the Behavior Intervention Manual to find strategies to modify the CCLS tasks. Teachers employ a wide range of resources, including manipulatives and technology, as well as small group instruction, to support students' individual needs. In addition, paraprofessionals who have received specialized training in many intervention and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) techniques actively engage these students and provide redirections and positive reinforcement. In these classrooms technology is well-utilized to create high interest experiences for students, and classroom computers are used not only for positive reinforcement for students working hard but also as a UDL tool for students who require more scaffolding. Rubrics for the units are modified for this student population. When visiting these classrooms and reviewing the bulletin boards, uniform rubrics were once again evident across the grade. However, the students with disabilities received their feedback from a rubric that included targeted language that referenced scaffolded skills and differentiation. Teachers also include extra prompts to help facilitate higher level questioning and student discussion. Prompt charts for reference and accountable talk was also evident in classrooms. School-wide, all students are highly engaged and their needs are being met as evidenced by this work as well as in curriculum maps teachers providing task analysis strategies that scaffold instruction for success.
- The school draws from staff input to make effective policy decisions around teaching and learning, and is proactive in identifying additional funding sources, all of which leaders to students creating high-level work. (1.3)
 - The assistant principal created teachers' schedules that utilize a spiraling method where preparation periods overlap among teachers on the same grade team, changing a period each day. In addition, teacher teams meet

formally and informally throughout the week, and grade meetings with either administration or the math coach take place monthly. Teachers plan with colleagues on their grade one to two periods per week and inquiry teams meet twice a week. Classroom observations revealed students being engaged in thoughtful lessons that had been developed as a result of work with the network. Teachers were also observed providing wait time for students to respond to questions, and students were engaged in discussions in which they supported their opinions through the use of conversation prompts created with the students and posted in those classrooms. School leaders have created optimum conditions for teachers to analyze and reflect on improved instructional practices with their colleagues, leading to improved accountability and enhanced school-wide goal attainment.

- After analyzing the results from the standardized tests and realizing that English language learners were the lowest performing students, while also noting that this year the school had an 8% increase in this particular population, the principal reorganized her school budget to fund an extra part-time English language learner teacher. She also placed the students in classes by their language acquisition designation. The beginner and low-intermediate students are in a pullout model, receiving eight periods of instruction a week. The high-intermediate and advanced students have a push-in model where the general education and English language learner teacher team-teach. This enables the lowest performers to receive specific targeted academic intervention with a decreased teacher-to-student ratio, resulting in accelerated progress for all subgroups of students. As a result of the many adjustments that have taken place with school organization, identification of targeted students, specialized training of teachers through the network and a strong UDL approach when adapting curriculum, the school is seeing positive change. For example, a review of student work revealed that English language learners are showing progress in their ability to write a response to a text that expresses an opinion or tries to persuade the reader, which is one of the school's goals.
- Through regular use of relevant data, leaders and faculty have an understanding of their performance and progress of students by group and by subject, which informs instruction and organizational adjustments. (2.2)
 - When the principal first came to the school, rubrics were non-existent as teachers used mostly checklists. As a result of workshops and follow-up professional development, teachers now design common rubrics, which have resulted in student work that reflects the instructional shifts. For example, Reading Standard 10 states that student should read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently. Within the classrooms, rubrics were displayed that reflected the domain focus. The focus standards were also highlighted in all rooms on charts and they were identified using a star or sticker to show the teaching alignment during the lesson with the focus standard. Embedded tasks are rigorous and the clear rubrics give students meaningful feedback for moving forward in their learning. This makes teachers more highly effective in making instructional decisions, resulting in improving student performance as demonstrated in improved student performance on the fall term English language arts and math performance task as compared to the prior school year.

- Administrators monitor student performance through various technology systems. V-Math is routinely reviewed to track the students who are in the lowest third in math performance and attend the Early Morning Program, as well as to inform the administration as to how to formulate and adjust the Response to Intervention (RTI) schedule that is in place for these students. This analysis informs how administrators work with teachers during planning sessions to make adjustments and additions to the math curriculum. Administration also collects data from ARIS so that they can provide professional development support for teachers who are growing in specific curriculum areas. Teachers and administrators also use ARIS when meeting with parents to discuss their child's performance. Performance Series is yet another data tool that allows staff to check the alignment of the reading curriculum against data results. It also supports administration in making informed decisions on how to budget for more classroom resources. As a result of the work with the data systems, teachers are able to look at data and move their instruction, such as through more flexible student grouping or other instructional adjustments.
- Teachers benefit from participating in professional collaborations that foster reflection as well as provide options for researching effective instructional techniques that focus on improved student achievement. (4.2)
 - Grade level teams, one of many teams at the school, are given multiple copies of Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) wheel to plan lessons that foster student engagement and discussions. Teacher mentioned how they are incorporating the DOK and CCLS into lesson planning. For example, the kindergarten team has incorporated more informational texts and academic vocabulary in accordance with the CIE. One kindergarten teacher mentioned how the CIE took out patterns in the math curriculum, which led the team to alter their math focus. This work has resulted in cohesive planning, coherence and consistency across all grades throughout the school as well as the building of a reflective collaborative community that focuses on improved student learning.
 - Every teacher on each grade team has a role. The grade leader is in charge of common planning meetings, distributing materials to teachers on the grade, returning documents to administration, keeping teachers informed of grade specific items from the administration and the Network, planning and organizing trips that are aligned to the curriculum and regularly bringing ideas, suggestions and concerns to the principal. The inquiry teacher is in charge of the grade level inquiry team, maintaining the grade level inquiry binder, and putting inquiry work on ARIS. The data specialist is in charge of collecting data, bringing it to grade meetings, analyzing the data and looking for trends to share with their colleagues. The data teacher also collects data that administration requests for grade level meetings and conferences. The analysis of the school wide data has led teachers to identify students who are in the bottom third to be a part of their inquiry group and has also allowed grades to clearly identify their area of weakness and make it the inquiry focus. Data analysis has also been used to target students for the Early Morning Program and to create groupings for teachers who are engaged in the push-in RTI periods. This shared leadership has led to the staff establishing a school-wide, consistent structure of identifying, targeting and assessing students in order to increase learning outcomes.

What the school needs to improve

- Deepen differentiation of instruction so that all lessons engage students and offer suitable challenge at their level, including effective questions that elicit higher-order thinking and extend learning. (1.2)
 - Whereas the school ascribes to a rigorous curriculum and has communicated that Webb's Depth of Knowledge wheel is the basis for designing coherent curricula that meet the differentiated needs of students, the practice of providing students with multiple opportunities to fully engage in learning activities is inconsistent. Most classroom instruction observed provide one activity for all students regardless of their performance level, learning style or designation as a student with a disability or an English language learner, thereby limiting entry points for students in the curriculum and the opportunity for students to produce differentiated work products that demonstrate higher levels of thinking.
 - The school is actively working on its goal of improving student critical thinking skills through questioning and academic tasks. While students are well-behaved and actively engaged in most classrooms observed, in-class questioning, engagement and work products demonstrate varying levels of rigor. Because pedagogy is inconsistent, some students push their thinking and other students do not, resulting in missed opportunities for students to develop higher-order thinking skills.
- Extend and expand communication and collaboration with parents to increase their capacity to assist in their child's learning and to enable them to track progress towards attaining set goals. (3.4)
 - As written in the principal's School Self Evaluation Form, the "school community embraces the cultural diversity of our students and truly believes that all children can learn and be truly successful." Even though administration has conveyed this in faculty conferences, as evidenced in the faculty conference notes and PowerPoint presentations, school-wide celebrations (student of the month, book of the month, after school dances and programs), it is not communicated in the staff handbook and the accountability of these expectations is not evident in the teacher professional development binder. This lack of clear, written expectations results in staff not knowing well the school and administration's goals around supporting cultural diversity, thus it is not being translated consistently into the staff's daily work with students and families.
 - Even though the school's previous administration issued a generic progress report in each Core Curriculum subject at the end of each unit and one of the recommendations of the 2010 Quality Review was to make these reports more substantial and address expectations, parents at the parent meeting mentioned that the new administration has not distributed any progress reports to students. This reduces opportunities for ongoing, reciprocal discussion regarding student learning and progress.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Horace Harding Elementary 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