

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Henry Hudson

Middle School 125

1111 PUGSLEY AVENUE

BRONX NY,10472

Principal: Lori Anne DiMarco-evanko

Dates of review: April 9 - 10, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Teresa Caccavale

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Henry Hudson is a middle school with 632 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 15% Black, 58% Hispanic, 2% White, and 25% Asian students. The student body includes 18% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 90.5%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

The school maintains a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes towards learning that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults. (1.4)

- School leaders and staff met at the beginning of the year with all students to set a positive calm tone of behavioral expectations for the school year that is maintained via the principal's, assistant principals and guidance counselors open door policies that allow students to speak to someone at any time. They are happy to be greeted by the school administration every morning and at dismissal and appreciate the teachers' nurturing and caring attitude. Furthermore, staff and students indicated that the focus of their work across the day, afterschool, and on weekends, in small groups, creates a closer connection and bonding that has led to increased respect as well as opportunities for students to reveal social emotional issues, and student voice that is welcomed and valued. Students and teachers further noted that there is a strong administrative presence this year and that they feel safe in classrooms and during class transitions in the hallway. Additionally, the dean's monitoring of the halls, and the lunchroom, leads to students feeling they are held accountable for their behavior, feel valued, and supported and their learning needs are being met.
- Parents are encouraged to participate in the school community and in instruction and curriculum development via. School Leadership Team (SLT) coordinated classroom walkthroughs show them the changes that are happening regarding advancing their children's learning. Parents who also provide feedback and suggestions to the school community stated that the principal is transparent and they feel they are true partners in their children's educational process. A parent website, and progress reports three times a semester, in addition to the standard report card, ensures that families are welcomed, informed and supported. Additionally, teachers and other school staff communicate regularly with parents about student performance via email and personal phone calls, and use Engrade to communicate and provide feedback regarding class participation, test scores, attendance, and homework as a system to collaborate with parents towards student progress. All constituents agree that these structures result in student support that encourages good decision-making and promotes student development. Additionally parents have seen a positive change this year as they attend workshops and are involved in assessing, critiquing, and reflecting on ways of making things better for their children, leading to increased reading levels in Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) data, as well as personal growth of students.
- The principal has created a learning community well focused on student performance with a vision to accelerate learning for all students. (3.4)
 - The school administration works collaboratively with staff, students, and parents, to promote high expectations by improving teacher practice using the Danielson Framework for Teaching, planning effective lessons, and adjusting the curriculum to support Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) relevant to students' needs and interests. Staff

members as instructional leads facilitate professional work and support capacity building so that school-wide expectations are shared across grades and the school, as well as stimulating collegial partnerships. Supported by collaboration with outside agencies including New York City Center Learning through an Extended Art Program and Midoria Friends some teachers work to incorporate the arts in the curriculum, and co-teaching, push-in, inter-visitations, and inquiry, create common commitment to articulated values and beliefs held by administrators and the teaching community. Consequently there are high levels of accountability for student learning as evidenced by a child-centered environment and a positive turnaround to the school's culture.

- The school engages parents in a variety of activities and informational meetings; therefore, parents have a good understanding of school-level data, are highly informed as to their role in supporting the academic as well as social-emotional well-being of their children, and are aware of the implementation of State standards. The school community reinforces college and career readiness by connecting to real world learning through curriculum, non-fiction texts, educational trips, workshops, and theater, and parents understand the increased academic demands are preparing their children for the future. Ongoing dialogue and established partnerships among stakeholders that center on student learning and individual success include programs available to students and families including academic intervention programs, academic enrichment programs, wellness, life-skills and career readiness, bullying prevention, literacy through arts and CCLS, educational field trips and workshops, cultural events, and Saturday Academy (focusing two hours on math instruction and two hours on ELA instruction), and Sunday Test Prep Academy. Concerted efforts to engage parents in the educational process lead to parents viewing themselves as important partners in the progress of the school and as such high academic and social-emotional learning expectations for their children are the norm.
- The school uses the observation of classroom teaching to elevate school wide instructional practices and promote professional growth. (4.1)
 - The administration has developed and is implementing a yearlong system for frequently observing targeted teacher practice that results in pertinent and teacher improvement plans that includes immediate verbal feedback, written feedback, and professional development opportunities. Additionally the school leaders monitor the impact of the observations and provide modeling, peer support, and assess implementation of next steps. The instructional lead teachers further support teachers to successfully implement next steps through the use of meetings during which teachers are required to bring “text-in-hand” student work to assess student learning after an observed lesson, to discuss success rate, and plan next steps. A school wide professional development plan is differentiated to meet individual teacher's needs. The school's varied professional development, by content and participant, uses real-time data, including formal classroom visitations, to monitor teacher progress. This focus on building the capacity of the learning community incorporates taking practical steps to move teachers and support staff to engage in reflective thinking and practices along with the implementation of the Citywide Instructional Expectations(CIE) aligned to the CCLS to help foster student performance growth. Consequently there is increased teacher attendance at “lunch and learns” professional development sessions and

participation in the afterschool interventions. School staff indicated that at the beginning of the year they were hesitant to all be “reading teachers”, yet there has been a shift in teacher practice and a willingness to participate in the implementation of new and improved practices as evidenced on rubrics and teacher feedback forms. Recently many teachers attended a workshop on reciprocal reading to support student learning. Teachers interviewed said they have had the opportunity to observe other colleagues teaching, receive peer support through coaching or watching another teacher model a lesson and they appreciate the immediate and frequent feedback given by the administrative team. Teachers also participate in offsite professional development and leadership capacity is being developed as teachers are encouraged to register for PD based on stated needs and interests. Additionally all three APs have their own PD plans that are focused on specific leadership goals. This had led to school-wide practices that promote professional growth and reflection.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen the design of curricula and academic tasks to consistently support rigorous and cognitively engaging learning opportunities for all students. (1.1)
 - Teachers are using the Rubicon Atlas to continuously revise curriculum maps so that they are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). The curriculum shows evidence of lessons that expose students to progressively sequence materials. Additionally teachers showed evidence of planning and using the Depth of Knowledge Framework to design questions that require critical and analytical thinking. Administrators monitor the development of curriculum maps and units to ensure a rigorous and coherent curriculum. Teachers indicated that they review their individual lesson plans weekly relative to the curriculum maps to ensure that they are on track and reflect both the revisions to curriculum and use of resources. They also work with instructional lead/coaches to support their implementation of next steps. During weekly common planning time teachers work together to make changes and additions that are recommended and implemented. Core content area teachers have completed two performance tasks based on the CCLS. In addition, scaffolds for subgroups of students are outlined in curriculum maps across grades and subjects. However, during visits to some classrooms, students were observed copying information into notebooks, completing surface level graphic organizers, responding to low level questions and working in a compliant, passive manner on assigned tasks. Therefore, although curricula and lesson plans target key standards aligned to the CCLS units of study, the academic tasks and lessons did not consistently promote rigorous habits to engage all students, including those in relevant sub-groups, thus missing out on developing students’ cognitive thinking skills across all grades and subjects, and hindering academic achievement.
- Enhance teaching strategies, including scaffolds and routines, in order to enrich student participation, thereby increasing opportunities for further development of critical thinking skills. (1.2)
 - The school believes that students learn best through the workshop model, and across classrooms students were grouped and working on tasks during the independent portion of the lesson. Several classes visited indicated that some students were using higher order thinking skills specifically in ELA and science. Additionally the learning objective was appropriately aligned to the

CCLS and teachers modeled a skill or strategy as students engaged in both guided and independent practice. Teachers circulate the classroom taking notes and having discussions with small groups about the tasks thus providing additional guidance, but lesson adjustments were not always visible. For example in one classroom observed, the teacher had a group of students working together and recording data on a Google document. However, one student was doing all the work while the others were chatting and not engaged with the task at hand. Additionally, although all teachers have New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) and Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) data, and goals readily available during classroom visits, it was not evident that teachers were using this data to adjust their instruction to specifically meet the needs of identified subgroups within their classes. Class visits did not reflect interactive activities and lesson adaptations to challenge and push the thinking of special needs students and English language learners. Classroom structures to ensure that all students participated in tasks as well as differentiated questioning during independent work was not consistent, thereby resulting in limited scaffolds and supports for all students to produce high level work. Furthermore, a few classes' lessons did not provide students with adequate opportunity to think deeply about text, but instead had them summarize readings or respond to questions, which did not require analysis, resulting in missed opportunities for all learners to show high levels of thinking.

- Strengthen the analysis of data gathering at the grade and school level to develop a stronger understanding of subgroup patterns and trends to improve student outcomes. (2.2)
 - Teachers use I-ready, and teacher made formative and summative assessments results as well as DRP data across classrooms and grades to track instructional reading levels. They also meet weekly in collaborative teams to analyze and discuss pre- and post-assessment results, “in-the-moment” assessments, and rubric evaluation, to determine next steps for students. In addition, teachers meet with the principal three times a year for a “data chat” regarding individual student progress and assessment data is available in the school’s data binders. However, the assessment information is not consistently used in each classroom to strategically inform effective revisions to lessons with the purpose of improving identified learning gaps. Additionally, the use of student self-assessments are not common practices across classrooms and checks for understanding were not consistently incorporated into lessons or observed during class visits. Consequently, adjustments to lessons and general feedback posted on student work do not provide detailed next steps that are clearly understood by students to improve their learning, thereby limiting opportunities for ownership, and accelerating and meeting their learning potential.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

| School name: Henry Hudson | 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 |