

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

The Hunts Point Middle School

08X424

**730 Bryant Avenue
Bronx
NY 10472**

Principal: Sonya Johnson

Dates of review: February 12-13, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Timothy Behr

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Hunts Point is a middle school with 408 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 30% Black, 68% Hispanic, 2% White students. The student body includes 17% English language learners and 23% 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 88.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school is a safe haven for students to learn and they appreciate the good level of support they receive from the administration and faculty for both their personal and academic growth. (1.4)
 - The school has experienced a significant decrease in disciplinary infractions as a result of implementing a positive behavior intervention program entitled Help-Encourage-Respect-Others (HERO). Another contributing factor to the improvement of student discipline was the hiring of a full-time dean. Student hallway traffic patterns have been adjusted and staff deployment schedules were amended in response to a spike in negative student activity, specifically during 1:00 and 2:00pm. In addition, the level of adult support during lunch hours has increased to address inappropriate student behavior. The dean and counselor hold monthly character education assemblies to reinforce school expectations for student behavior. A check -in/check-out protocol coordinated by the guidance counselor with teacher assistance serves as daily connection for students who have a disproportionate number of infractions. All adults respond to behavior in a consistent manner as evidenced by the use of referral forms. Students wear uniforms that were selected and approved by the student body. City Year, a community-based organization which supports the Mayor's attendance initiative and organizes award ceremonies, has resulted in attendance increasing to 90.1%. A guidance counselor assists with at risk counseling and the Positive Behavior Intervention team assists with developing a culture for learning through professional development activities. Nine principal and 9 superintendent suspensions this year-to-date shows a decrease from 46 principal and 14 superintendent suspensions last year. (a, b)
- Teams of teachers work collaboratively to share practice, analyze data, and to plan curriculum and instruction to improve student outcomes. (2.2)
 - Teacher teams analyze summative data to identify student's strengths and weaknesses. This analysis leads to the general identification of skills not mastered. The English language arts and math teams have developed curriculum maps and pacing calendars which are placed online to encourage unified alignment of instruction. There are grading policies with some alignment to the school's key standards. "Team Elated", the school-wide English language arts teacher team is beginning to implement a color-coded check list to assess and improve student writing skills. Students will use the checklist to ensure that they have a thesis statement, explanation, a transition, and quotations included in their writing assignments. Some grades and content areas use rubrics to provide feedback to students to improve their learning. All teams review student work using the Can, Almost, Cannot (CAN) protocol. As a result, the analysis of student work to measure progress and develop a more coherent approach to teaching and learning for students is emerging. (a,b)
- The principal makes informed organizational decisions to support improvements in student learning. (1.3)

- Notwithstanding citywide budgetary limitations, the newly hired principal has prioritized scheduling opportunities for teachers to meet weekly in order to review units of study and alignment of lessons and assessments to the Common Core Learning Standards. In addition, the principal and network periodically collaborate so that teachers and teams receive ongoing, professional development that supports their growing understanding of the workshop model. The current focus is having teachers create a strong teaching point in order to engage students in rigorous tasks to improve learning outcomes. As a result, support is emerging for teacher implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and their ongoing understanding of differentiated instruction to maximize student learning outcomes. (b)
- The new principal is strategically hiring high quality, licensed teachers to improve student outcomes. A new English language arts teacher is utilizing data to inform class grouping. A newly hired full-time dean has been pivotal in improving student behavior. An after-school English enrichment program and an Algebra study program addresses the learning needs of the school's higher performing students. The ability to incorporate technology into instruction was one of the determining factors in choosing a pedagogue to teach science. Instead of losing a highly effective teacher the principal creatively placed the individual into a 6 grade math program that meets license mandates and will support closing the achievement gap in math. The school-based support team ensures that all Individual Education Plans are implemented and tracked to ensure student progress. As a result, the school is providing several learning opportunities with appropriate personnel to improve student outcomes and achieve instructional goals. This allows for more focused instruction and organizational supports to improve student performance. (c)

What the school needs to improve

- Improve consistency in curricular and extension activities to address the very diverse needs of students, especially English language learners and special education students in order to maximize their learning. (1.1)
 - The school's curriculum does not prioritize support for student subgroups nor does it consistently provide extension activities for students performing at or above grade level. Integrated co-teaching classes and special education classes do not support individual learning needs. Individual Education Plans, although student-specific, are not driving instruction, nor do they inform task modifications aligned to curriculum. Some classes involve copying notes from a *Smart* board while others have students complete rexo sheets. As a result, the vast majority of students in all grades are performing at a tier 2 levels as measured by Acuity benchmark summaries in English language arts and math. (b)
 - Concern regarding consistently low student performance led the newly hired principal to focus on academic achievement, career and college readiness and school-wide community involvement. However, lesson planning is generic across all grades and subjects and tasks do not consistently cognitively engage a variety of learners, nor do they consistently involve real world applications. There are no provisions to accommodate higher performing students. Work folders contain minimal work and demonstrate little use of higher order thinking

skills. Consequently, students, especially English language learners and special education students are not performing to their full potential as evidenced by the low level work products and state test results. (c)

- Establish a consistent approach using formative assessments to plan activities that provide the right level of challenge for students performing at different levels and result in meaning work products across all grades and curricula. (1.2)
 - State test results reveal that students do not know their number facts and have limited vocabulary. Yet, the school has not prioritized teaching these skills. Instruction is typically whole group with minimal opportunities for scaffolding tasks to ensure multiple entry points for all learners. Targeted assistance to students and small group instruction is not a consistent practice throughout the school. Instructional resources are not replenished regularly. Consequently, teachers plan and present generic lessons and students demonstrate varying degrees of involvement. As a result, students are not learning to their full potential as evidenced by state test results, acuity results, and work samples that lack progress and performance. (b)
 - There is investment in technology, especially with *Smart* Boards, to support lesson planning and classroom instruction. However, teachers are not currently taking full advantage of this potential as they are not utilizing web-based resources to enhance their lessons and discussions as evidenced by the *Smart* boards being covered in some classrooms. In classrooms where students were engaged in conversations with each other, the talk required minimal use of critical thinking skills. Furthermore, student work products did not consistently evidence application of critical thinking skills to complete tasks. As a result, students exhibit very uneven levels of performance and their learning is not maximized. (c)
- Improve the use of a research-based rubric to monitor teacher effectiveness with a clear focus on strengthening instructional practices throughout the school (4.1)
 - The school participates in the Teacher Effectiveness Program. The principal has completed numerous informal observations. No formals to date. However, without consistent ongoing oral and written feedback teachers are not informed about the quality of their work. As a result, there are no opportunities to improve classroom practice and, therefore, meaningful, targeted instruction for individual students and subgroups is lacking. (a)
 - Through informal observations the principal identified the need for teachers to receive professional development in the area of differentiated instruction to provide multiple entry points for all students to learn. Network support prioritizes teacher planning utilizing the workshop model. The current focus is on having pedagogues create a strong teaching point and to shorten the mini lesson in order for students to have more time to engage in the task. However, a clear structure for using observation data to plan for professional development is not yet in place. Consequently, a teacher sharing of content knowledge to deepen pedagogical skills was a void that is beginning to be addressed. As a result, decisions for tenure, hiring, and retention are ill-informed and professional growth of new teachers is hampered. (c)

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: The Hunts Point 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