

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Howard Beach

Elementary-Middle School 146

98-01 159th Ave.

Queens

NY 11414

Principal: Mary Keegan

Dates of review: January 22 - 23, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Michele Lloyd-Bey

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Howard Beach is an elementary-middle school with 700 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 2% Black, 32% Hispanic, 62% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 93.2%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Students engage in standards-based curricula that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) that integrate the instructional shifts, promote college, and career readiness for all learners. (1.1)
 - The school implements standards-based curricula that consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills in all grades and classes. Curriculum maps have been created in core subjects, and are reviewed constantly during team meetings, to ensure that they include rigorous questions and reflect the instructional shifts, such as text-based evidence. For example, in a grade 4 class, students engaged in a shared reading of the Brick Birch House, and using the new literacy program identified evidence to support the writer's ideas and focused on the skill of *compare and contrast* to cite evidence from the text in order to defend their responses. Furthermore, the principal provides teachers with regular planning time to become better acquainted with the new instructional programs and to make adjustments that meet the needs of all learners. For example, in kindergarten, teachers found that the literacy program did not meet students' needs in phonics. Therefore, teachers now include a research-based phonics program into their daily literacy program, resulting in more kindergarten students making progress in their independent reading levels.
 - The principal stated that she provides teachers with regular common planning time to collaboratively review student work data to target the learning needs of all students. Teachers review documents, such as teachers' instructional guides and assessments to determine that the instructional shifts are embedded in all content areas. Teachers employ a variety of effective reading strategies in their instructional planning using non-fiction text in the citing of text-based evidence. Writing is exceptionally emphasized, aligned with the curricula, and evident as the school's environment is print rich, with students' engaged in writing persuasive essays, research reports, completing performance tasks, and responding to various forms of literature. The leadership and teachers have focused on math to ensure that students have a clear understanding of math vocabulary, which is reinforced during daily math lessons via a problem of the day. Furthermore, teachers are constantly adjusting curriculum maps in all subject areas to reflect revisions based on the expectations of the CCLS and instructional shifts. The social studies teacher adjusted the social studies curriculum to and now includes Socratic literature circles that improve thoughtful and engrossing discussion and enhance students' ability to think deeply. During a teacher team meeting, the middle school science teacher shared that she receives effective instructional strategies from her colleagues in social studies and English language arts and as a result she now engages her students in close reading using the instructional shifts to enable students to become proficient with informational text. Writing prompts are on display in classrooms and reinforce the importance of accountable talk. Consequently, the school's standards-based curricula emphasize rigorous habits and engage all learners, including English language learners (ELL's) and students with disabilities (SWD's) in challenging tasks.

- The principal makes thoughtful organizational decisions across the school that is aligned with the school's instructional goals and ensures students produce meaningful work products in core subjects. (1.3)
 - Thoughtful planning allows teachers common meeting time, resulting in thoughtful professional collaborations that improve teacher pedagogy in areas such as questioning, and enhance student engagement practices. Substitute teachers are hired to support one teacher from each core curriculum teacher team; so that they can attend Network facilitated professional development topics such as close reading, unpacking the new curriculum and curriculum mapping. Furthermore, inquiry teams are scheduled to meet three Mondays per month, and teachers use this time to analyze data, evaluate student work for next steps in instructional planning, and to collaboratively identify effective strategies in literacy and math to support student needs. Additionally, allocation and use of resources and partnerships address the school's needs. Class sets of novels, art materials, textbooks, and computer software support the school's instructional goals. The principal indicated that her analysis of the school's data revealed that many students in the primary grades are struggling in literacy and math. Therefore, she hired an F-status reading teacher to support grade 3 students in strengthening their skills. An interdisciplinary art program through a partnership with the Rockaway Art Artist Alliance supports kindergarten students who were unable to be programmed for art during the school day. Additionally, based on the analysis of data, a math academic intervention teacher was hired to support students in grades 4, 6, and 8, and an F-status reading teacher was hired to address the academic needs of students in grades 3 and 4. The school ensures that struggling students, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs) are programmed to receive direct instruction from teachers who are able to address their instructional needs during the Saturday academy. Hence, students receive targeted support that is needed to address the goals of the improving literacy and math across the school, and formative student data indicates that students are improving their performance in all grades.
- Teachers across the school use common assessment data in order to gain a clear picture of student progress towards the school's goals, and to make effective adjustments to meet the needs of all learners. (2.2)
 - Results from a variety of data sources, such as Fountas and Pinnell in grades kindergarten to grade 8 is closely tracked by the leadership and reviewed during teacher team meetings in order to make targeted instructional decisions for students, such as grouping decisions. State assessment data is also examined to determine appropriate student groupings at the beginning of the school year, and later formative assessment data generated from reading and math programs helps teachers identify very specific patterns and trends in the school, grade, and individual classes, and support adjustments to their instruction. Teachers consistently monitor student performance in literacy and math, and make adjustments in student programming, such as Saturday Academy for struggling learners. Rubrics are used in every grade and class, and are customized to align with projects such as performance tasks. Students are able to articulate their use of rubrics and identify their next steps for improvement in their learning. The school's Grade

Assessment Summary tracking sheets provides a blue print for the school's work in literacy and math based on whole school performance. For example, the school meticulously analyzed assessments administered in reading and math for every grade, noting grade trends, strengths, and challenges for all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities. The school found that across the fourth grade, students' strengths was stating their opinion in constructed response questions, while many of them struggled in math solving multi-step problems, deciding which operation to use and when. Indicated on the assessment summary sheets are plans for next steps, such as intervention programming for additional support, and strategies to be used on the grade, such as implementing main idea and detail maps, and effectively using highlighters to identify text-based-evidence. Furthermore, the principal, using the analysis of the data assessment sheets for decision-making; she is able to ensure that all grades and classes have the resources that are needed on the grade. For example, the academic intervention teacher pushes directly into grade 3 and grade 4 classrooms and provides intense support during the guided reading component of the literacy program, which is improving student performance on the grade as evidenced in growth in students' writing, and Fountas and Pinnell reading levels.

- The principal's efficient systems for monitoring teacher practice ensure that they receive effective feedback and next step guidance utilizing Danielson Framework for improved teacher practice and student outcomes. (4.1)
 - The school's comprehensive professional development plan effectively aligns with its goals and identifies differentiated support for all teachers. School leaders and teachers support the utilization of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, and evidence of their professional learning can be observed in areas such as classroom environment, planning, and questioning. School leaders frequently observe teachers and provide immediate verbal feedback. Effective feedback is also memorialized in writing and shared with teachers with very specific next steps for improvement. Furthermore, the principal uses the observation of teachers in an effort to improve the practice of other teachers across the school. For example, teachers who demonstrate *highly effective* practices serve as models for their colleagues who observe them during intervisitations. A major area of observation has been Socratic seminars and literature circles, which is improving students' discussion across the school, and questioning techniques. Teachers complete intervisitation feedback forms, where they are encouraged to scribe a description of the lesson, and indicate how they might replicate the practice within their own classrooms. Close review of teacher observation reports reveal that teachers across the school are becoming more effective in questioning based on the Danielson Framework for teaching.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine teaching strategies to reflect multiple entry points in the curricula for all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, in order to further enhance meaningful work products. (1.2)
 - The principal's deep commitment to improving student learning is reflected in the kinds of facilitative instructional strategies teachers are provided with during professional development, which they implement in classrooms.

Discussion strategies such as Socratic seminars and literature circles result in students engaging in accountable talk and standards-based work products across the school. Teachers utilize the Danielson Framework, engage students in higher order questioning, and lesson planning focuses on instructional shifts, and emphasizes text-based evidence and making connections. In a grade 3 general education class, students engaged in a hands-on multiplication lesson. The teacher worked independently with students and asked questions that pushed their thinking. Students used manipulatives to solve problems and an English language learner in the class received individualized support as the teacher helped him independently by assisting him by speaking in Spanish when needed. During the application component of the lesson, the teacher assigned math tasks based on the needs of students for independent practice. She was able to effectively assign tasks because she had been taking notes on students as she circulated the class during their small group activity and independent practice. However, this level of pedagogy that addressed the multiple entry point needs of all learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities was not apparent in the vast majority of classrooms, resulting in decreased number of students engaging in lessons where their instruction was differentiated, impacting high levels of thinking, participation, and ownership.

- Strengthen communication and collaboration with families to further support student progress towards the expectations of college and career readiness. (3.4)
 - The principal consistently articulates high expectations to her entire school community during faculty conferences, parent meetings, and during professional development based on the utilization of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Furthermore, as the result of the observation of teachers' practice and student performance, there is a high level of accountability for staff and students. Students are aware of the principal's expectations to view high levels of accountable talk in all grades and classrooms. During my large group session with students, a grade 8 student shared, "this principal has brought in a new perspective and expects us to engage in more group work and there is more focus on discussion in our classrooms." Students also share their knowledge of CCLS aligned rubrics, which support the school college and career readiness practices across the school. The new math program, for grades k through grade 5, has an on-line parent academy, which sets a higher standard and breaks down math concepts for parents in order to support their ability to help their children at home. Moreover, programs such as E-chalk, school messenger, and student progress reports, ensure that parents are kept abreast of the performance of their children and strengthen the culture of learning at the school. However, there are a limited number of family engagement activities that provide all parents with a shared understanding regarding the expectations of college and career readiness, resulting in a diminished partnership between the home and school in order to support student progress towards meeting those expectations.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

| School name: Howard Beach | 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 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards? | | | X | | | | |
| 1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the 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 supports 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 those expectations? | | | 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 student 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 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection? | | | 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 |