



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Henry David Thoreau School

30Q017

**28-37 29th Street
Queens
NY 11102**

Principal: Rebecca Heyward

Date of review: November 18, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Sandra Litrico

The School Context

The Henry David Thoreau School is an elementary school with 1032 students from grades Pre-Kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 10% Black, 57% Hispanic, 12% White, 19% Asian and 2% multi-racial students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 93%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
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	Additional Findings	Developing
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	Focus	Developing
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	Additional Findings	Developing
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Additional Findings	Proficient
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Celebration	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school leader has set up effective inquiry based teacher teams that analyze assessment data. They use protocols to examine and refine student and teacher work to increase student learning.

Impact

Teachers are collaborating and making adjustment to curriculum units to promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts.

Supporting Evidence

- The K to 2 teacher team analyzed student data results and realized students were not making adequate progress. They formed a sub-committee to address changes in the literacy block and adopted Foundations, a new phonics program. Teachers are currently designing unit plans to meet the needs of students. They also looked closely at student writing samples and realized Common Core knowledge did not focus enough on the teaching of writing. They have supplemented units from Teachers College Writing curriculum which has resulted in increased student stamina and volume of writing.
- Teacher teams in grades 3 to 5 are using the results of state assessments to adjust their plans. The 3rd grade team was reviewing the Expeditionary Learning Unit and the common core reading standards. They began making adjustments and revisions as they built in scaffolds, infused writing units and added a scavenger hunt activity on text features. Their focus for the unit was teaching students how to support their claims by citing evidence from the text.
- Teachers expressed that the vertical teams allowed them to understand what foundations were needed in each grade to be successful in the following grade. They said that they were meeting more often and many teachers are now sharing resources, strategies and plans.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently produce high levels of student discussion and meaningful student work products. In most classes, only a few students participated in lower level discussions and completed tasks at Depth of Knowledge levels 1-2. Most of the teachers' lesson plans only included the teaching point or learning objective.

Impact

In most classrooms visited, due to a lack of high quality supports, extensions and challenging tasks, there were uneven levels of student thinking, engagement and ownership by all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- During a second grade Core knowledge literacy lesson on Greece, students responded to teacher generated questions that were mostly recall of facts. Questions included "Who won the battle?" and "Who was the king of Sparta?" There was a brief turn and talk but the question posed and the time allotted did not lend itself to deep student conversation or discussion. The follow-up activity was an art activity on the Parthenon, which did not require higher order thinking or ownership of learning.
- Students in the fourth grade class were working on social studies projects on Native Americans. They were working in groups creating Haudenosaunee villages. Students were engaged in the activity and said they were applying the knowledge they acquired through previous reading to their models. However, there was no evidence of a lesson plan being taught and no plans were available. All students had the same activity and there were no project checklists or rubrics available to guide students.
- The first grade dual language class did have a clear teaching point which read "Good readers notice how their characters changes". The teacher modeled and charted characters actions and changes. Students had a choice of which character and story they wanted to focus on. However, there were students who needed additional support, and others who could have been giving more challenging work.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

School leaders and teachers are in the process of aligning the curriculum to Common Core Learning Standards across grades and subject areas. Most teachers are using the teacher guides from adopted programs as their curriculum and former units that were created previously. Though curriculum is loosely aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards in some classes, the instructional shifts are not embedded.

Impact

Many students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, are not consistently provided with rigorous tasks and learning opportunities to articulate high order thinking or provide opportunities to promote career and college readiness. Curricular and academic tasks do not reflect planning.

Supporting Evidence

- The school adopted Common Core knowledge last year in grades K to 2. However, assessment data revealed that students were not meeting their goals in literacy. As a result, some teachers are beginning to supplement the literacy block with Teachers College Reading & Writing Units and Foundations, in addition to using the Core knowledge program as a read aloud. Some lessons are following a workshop model structure, others are not. Currently, there is little coherence across grades and subject areas.
- There are no clear expectations for daily lessons plans. The teachers are beginning to create unit plans using the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) template. The majority of lesson plans reviewed during classroom visits only listed the topic and theme. Key student learning objectives and key learning activities were not included. Curricula and academic tasks did not consistently provide all students access to the curricula and the majority of tasks did not cognitively engage learners.
- Although there is evidence of project based learning, many of the projects and units do not promote higher level thinking, and do not include technology and research skills. Students stated that they rarely use computers in their classrooms. The teacher created unit on “Does a Bat Make a Good Pet” did not incorporate many of the instructional shifts. However, teacher teams are beginning to make some changes. The third grade for example, is currently reviewing the *All About Book* project and considering adding a choice of a PowerPoint presentation or brochure as a culminating activity for their next unit. The units in Expeditionary Learning which is used in grades 3 to 5 has also supported higher level thinking in some classrooms.

Findings

The school integrates some common assessments across the disciplines and the subsequent data is gathered and maintained. However, teachers are at the beginning stages of creating structures that would allow the data to be effectively used.

Impact

Assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment so that teachers inconsistently make effective adjustments at the teacher team and classroom levels, to meet individual learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Most classrooms were typified by irregular “spur of the moment” assessments that did not allow the teacher to effectively make adjustments to meet the learning needs of all students and students frequently were not aware of their next learning steps. There is little actionable feedback provided except on some student work that is posted. Checks for understanding in most cases were the completion of a worksheet or graphic organizer at the end of the lesson. Questioning is not used adequately as an assessment tool.
- Although assessments and rubrics are occasionally aligned to Common Core Learning Standards, they are not used consistently across classrooms. Some teachers take conference notes, while others do not. Running records are taken six times a year but results are not used effectively to plan guided reading groups and strategy lessons to support student progress.
- Teachers are beginning to look at students’ answers to short response questions from the Expeditionary Learning literacy program and have determined where the majority of students fall on the two point rubric. They plan to create a developmentally appropriate rubric that can be used to assess students. They also plan to analyze the gaps between how questions are phrased on the test and how they are posed in their expeditionary learning lessons to ensure data is effectively used to make meaningful classroom level and instructional modifications to target specific need of subgroups. However, this still remains in the planning stages.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school leader communicates high expectations to the entire staff including the teachers, students and parents and has fostered an orderly school community anchored in a culture, which rewards positive behavior and provides substantial intervention to unproductive behavior.

Impact

There is a high level of trust and respect across school relationships which in turn have produced a safe and inclusive environment.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has implemented the Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) and emphasizes respect, integrity, self-discipline and excellence for all students. The PBIS team meets regularly to analyze data and determine what additional supports are needed to strengthen practices within the Tier I group of students. The supports include the creation of a vertical instructional team that receives on-going training on using data to adjust instruction and engagement for at risk students. PBIS also supports college and career readiness skills such as self-regulation, self-control and confidence to work through challenges.
- The school has a partnership with New York University (NYU) Parent Corps. This partnership supports parents in helping them embed positive behavior strategies in the home. Through a partnership with City College of New York (CCNY), the school also has a social worker that is available to families on Fridays.
- As per an analysis of Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS) data, incidents have decreased by 10% compared to previous years. Last year data showed 18 incidents during the month of October compared to 9 during the month of October this year.
- There is a school wide reward system which includes incentives and events like Movie Night. A “Read to My Child” initiative in 2nd grade includes a trip to the public library, a series of questioning workshops for parents, and monthly “Read to My Child Days” in classrooms. The creation of an Attendance Wall is used to display the names of students with greater than 98% attendance and those that have improved their attendance rate.