



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

**Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning**

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**Henry Hudson**

**Middle School X125**

**1111 Pugsley Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10472**

**Principal: Michael Collins**

**Date of review: February 27, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Renardo Wright**

## The School Context

Henry Hudson is a middle school with 462 students from grade six through grade eight. The school population comprises 15% Black, 57% Hispanic, 3% White, and 25% Asian students. The student body includes 21% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 90.0%.

## School Quality Criteria

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

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

School leaders establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff and students. These expectations are consistently communicated through planned professional collaborations and training for staff, and through feedback and guidance supports for students.

### Impact

High expectations for all students are creating a pathway towards college and career readiness.

### Supporting Evidence

- The principal communicates high expectations to staff through cycles of observation and feedback to teachers. At the beginning of the school year, the principal meets with teachers to discuss school-wide and individual expectations for classroom practices. The school's professional development team analyzed the previous school year's observations and student achievement data and aligned professional development to high need areas identified within the Danielson Framework for Teaching designating questioning skills as an area of focus.
- All teachers are engaged in ongoing professional development and collaborations in which school leaders and teachers assume accountability for meeting established expectations. The principal, in collaboration with teachers, sets mutually agreed upon goals for teachers for the school year. Additionally, the principal has incorporated weekly meetings into the school schedule every Thursday for professional development and ongoing professional collaborations. Teachers meet by department and/or grade to collaborate on various school related topics. Additionally, the principal provides a weekly written newsletter, Hudson News, which provides staff information about upcoming professional learning opportunities in implementing best teaching practices.
- The school's guidance counselor meets with students on each grade to discuss high school and college readiness and to develop action plans for each student to support their academics and social development. In addition, school leaders provide assembly programs for students across all grades to discuss preparing for high school and college. Additionally, field trips are planned and scheduled during the school year to City College, Manhattan College, and Columbia University for students.
- Students reported that they frequently use the school's online system, Engrade, to check their grades and receive feedback from teachers to ascertain next steps both academic and social. Additionally, students are supported through the Positive Behavior Intervention Program that is implemented school wide to promote positive social behaviors. Students are acknowledged and awarded for good attendance and positive social behaviors. A decorated hallway bulletin board displayed the names of students awarded for their service for the month of February. In addition, weekly public announcements are made for groups of students with 100% attendance.

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### Findings

The school is emerging in their use of curricula-aligned assessments, daily assessment practices, grading policies, and task-specific rubrics to effectively measure students' progress and make instructional adjustments.

### Impact

Current assessments offer limited feedback to teachers and students regarding student achievement. Teachers do not fully address the learning needs of different groups of students as practice reflects inconsistent checks for understanding, student self-assessment, and effective instructional adjustments.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, grading policies and subject specific rubrics are visible for grading and assessing students' work but they are not fully aligned with the curricula. Rubrics tend to be generic and school assessments are a combination of individual efforts and some group-designed assessments. In some classrooms and hallway bulletin boards, students' work products and/or performance assessments were accompanied by actionable feedback from teachers. For example, a hallway bulletin board displayed sixth grade math assessments that were accompanied by commendations, recommendations, and next steps by classroom teachers. While this practice was very prevalent in math and English language arts, it wasn't evident across all content areas.
- During the classrooms visits, students were able to articulate why or how they are assigned to particular groups in only three out of seven classrooms. In a math class, a student shared that he was helping his classmate, who was having difficulties, with the assigned task. The student was well aware that he was performing at a higher level in math, based on common assessments, than his classmate. In a social studies classroom, a student shared that she was working with her partner because they were on the same reading and writing levels. Two students in an English language arts classroom shared that they were assigned to a group based on their interest.
- While the school has incorporated several ways for teachers to check for understanding during lessons through use of exit slips, Cornell notes, thumbs ups signals, and white board notations, there were no formative assessments observed across the majority of classrooms visited. During a social studies lesson, a teacher constantly walked around the classroom to assist students as they worked on the assigned task and during an English Language arts lesson, two teachers conferred with groups. In an eighth grade science class the teacher instructed students to write their responses on a wipe board and explain their responses to her and to the entire classroom. However, in four out of seven classrooms observed, teachers did not include any checks for understanding to assess students' learning and engagement.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### Findings

Curricula are not yet fully aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Academic tasks reflect planning to provide access to all learners.

### Impact

While planning reflects effort to provide access to a diversity of learners, current curricula lacks coherence and purposefulness in promoting college and career readiness.

### Supporting Evidence

- While school leaders and teaching staff have incorporated Common Core instructional shifts across math and English language Arts curricula, they are still in the process of incorporating shifts into all other content areas. In science, the integration of the instructional shifts is not always fully implemented. For example, a science lesson plan reviewed indicated alignment to the science curriculum map, but actual instructional shifts were not evident during the observed lesson. Based on the lesson plan and observation of the actual lesson, students were instructed to sit in pairs to read from an assigned text and look for questions. While students were clear on what was being asked, they were unclear on what the next instructional steps were and did not make use of the text in creating questions and/or discussion.
- School leaders and faculty are still in the process of aligning curricula to Common Core Learning Standards and making refinements and adjustments to cognitively engage all learners. While the school staff and administration say that adjustments are made to current curricula and academic tasks, there is no written evidence of strategic planning for refinement and/or adjustments so that all learners, particularly English Language learners and special education students, have full access to the curricula and opportunities to be cognitively engaged. For example, a curriculum map on Rubicon Atlas for English language arts in grade 6 provided as evidence, revealed that no revisions were made.
- The school's decision to use an online curriculum-mapping program, Rubicon Atlas, is beginning to build coherence across grades and content. Teachers use this planning tool and view other maps as a guide in their own planning.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### **Findings**

Across classrooms, teaching strategies were inconsistent in providing multiple entry points into lessons and student discussions reflected uneven levels of students understanding.

### **Impact**

Lack of multiple entry points leads to inconsistent engagement and demonstration of higher-order thinking skills in student work and discussions.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Across classrooms observed, lessons did not consistently provide evidence of the use of scaffolding and multiple entry points to cognitively engage all learners. In reviewing the teachers' lesson plans, it was noted that grouping of students and the use of differentiation were not consistent. Although students were often arranged in pairs or in groups, the assigned tasks were not differentiated and evidence was not found in using data to group students. The majority of classrooms observed involved teachers providing whole class instruction with one teaching document/tool for the entire class. However, in an eighth grade math lesson, a teacher was observed using graphic organizers, manipulatives, and wipe-off boards during the instructional lesson to fully engage and support all classroom learners.
- While there was discussion in all classrooms visited, communication tended to be teacher-to-student and student-to teacher. Students generated their own questions in only one of the seven classrooms visited.
- High-level discussions and engagement were inconsistent across all classrooms. In a sixth grade English language arts classroom, students were assigned roles within groups and provided with a few guiding prompts to encourage group discussions to debate whether the word, God, should be omitted in the Pledge of Allegiance. Students were eager to pick and share their positions. In an eighth grade math class, students were asked to explain how they solved the assigned math problem and arrived at their answers. Students problem solved within their groups, and took turns sharing out their findings. Regardless of their final solutions, all students were encouraged to discuss their answers. However, in other classrooms, teacher discourse dominated. For example, in a seventh grade math class, the teacher did most of the speaking and students had little opportunity to communicate with each other.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### Findings

The majority of classroom teachers participate in structured professional collaborations that are loosely aligned to school goals. Distributed leadership is developing at the school.

### Impact

The work of teachers in professional collaborations is developing an inquiry approach across teams and shared leadership is beginning to emerge to improve student learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- New teachers are scheduled to meet monthly as a team with a lead teacher, who provides them with guidance and assistance on various classroom matters. The lead teacher shared that at these team meetings, teachers engage in professional dialogue based on patterns and trends that the principal has identified based on visits to new teachers' classrooms. For example, all new teachers met with the lead teacher to discuss establishing classroom routines that would help foster effective teaching and learning. New teachers viewed a video, highlighting classroom routines and participated in a group discussion on ways to establish effective classroom routines. While new teachers are meeting monthly for professional collaboration, the focus of meetings is more support than structured inquiry learning.
- The school has established time on Thursdays for teachers to participate in professional collaborations. For example, social studies and English teachers are scheduled to meet weekly to discuss curriculum and pacing charts. Teachers are in the process of effectively identifying students and establishing protocols to analyze students' work. To support this process, teachers have constructed a document, titled Looking Collaboratively at Student Work Documenter to use during their team meetings. Teachers shared that they are still in the process of looking at patterns and trends that are prevalent across grades and content areas for various groups of students.
- Distributed leadership structures are developing to support leadership capacity building to include teachers in key decisions that impact student learning across all grades. School leaders utilize lead teachers to support teachers on grade and across content areas. During the teacher team meetings, teachers articulated that they felt they have voice in key decisions and that school leaders are open to teachers' academic and instructional input. The principal and teachers articulated that several teachers are part of the curriculum team, where many key instructional decisions are made. The principal also expressed his intention of including teachers on the instructional cabinet in the near future.