



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Abram Stevens Hewitt School

Elementary School X130

**750 Prospect Avenue
Bronx
NY 10455**

Principal: Lourdes Velazquez-Peay

**Date of review: December 4, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Beverly Ffolkes-Bryant, Ed.D**

Area of Focus

The Abram Stevens Hewitt School is an elementary school with 495 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 26% Black, 71% Hispanic, 1% White, 1% Asian and 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native students. The student body includes 23% English language learners and 24% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 91.3%.

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	Proficient
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	Celebration	Well Developed
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	Additional Findings	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school maintains a supportive learning environment that conveys high expectations to students and parents.

Impact

These structures support the school's high expectations, build buy-in and accountability among staff, students and their families, thus providing a clear path towards increased student achievement and college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school community, inclusive of the Parent Association (PA), the parent coordinator and principal, organize and facilitate numerous activities to promote and celebrate student success. Parents talked about how the principal sent the PA Executive Board members to Mercy College for a workshop about the Common Core Learning Standards and how parents can help their child at home. The PA President said not only did the workshop help her to better understand the Common Core Learning Standards but also she was planning to turnkey this information during the January PA meeting. Parents also spoke about how classroom teachers give workshops to help parents understand the Common Core and what is happening in their children's classroom. They spoke about how the fourth grade classroom teachers used one Tuesday Parent Engagement day to teach a math lesson and show parents the strategies needed to solve a math problem. Finally, each grade distributes a calendar for parents to do a particular activity at home with their child. One parent talked about how the kindergarten teacher not only gave her the calendar but the manipulatives to solve the problem. This enhances parent participation and fosters pride in student achievement.
- The principal consistently reinforces the grading goals for the school, which were introduced in September through ongoing conversations with teachers and feedback through classroom observations. The principal also sits in on grade level teacher meetings. She has created a data specialist in every grade who helps disseminate the pre- and post-assessments from the literacy, math and writing units and turnkey professional development. In addition, the principal has hired outside coaches and consultants in both literacy and math to provide ongoing support to teachers and give them the strategies and tools for lesson implementation. Teachers are also free to offer any suggestions towards the enhancement of the school goals based on what they see in the student data. These ongoing supports create a culture of mutual accountability of high expectations.
- Parents are active members of the school leadership team and contribute to address curricular concerns. In response to parents' comments in this year's School Survey, where they wanted more "hands-on" learning, the principal has instituted monthly culminating activities to the math program. During a second grade math activity, students showed their parents how to use Base 10 blocks to solve the problems in Chapter 1 of the GO Math! program. This resulted in an increase in student performance with Base 10 blocks, which further promotes higher level thinking skills and project-based learning for the students.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

While pedagogy provides consistent instructional supports, the use of strategic entry points and extensions, including questioning and discussion techniques that foster deep reasoning in student work products varies across the school.

Impact

Across classrooms, curricula extensions support students to produce meaningful work products, yet there are missed opportunities for all learners, including in the school's subgroups, to take ownership of their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers employ one-to-one conferences, disaggregate data, and know their students well. Students report that their teachers work with them individually or in small groups, which gives them confidence to be successful. However, in the vast majority of classrooms, students engage in whole group activities strictly aligned with prescribed objectives and they utilize the same materials. Consequently, varied and multiple entry points to maximize individual student learning and enriching subgroup performance are limited.
- While individual teachers and teacher teams plan differentiated lessons using students' reading levels, there is limited evidence of teachers providing appropriately challenging work aligned to student achievement levels, including effective questioning. In lessons observed there were missed opportunities to push student thinking. For example, in one math class observed, a substantial part of the instructional time was spent on motivation and a mini-lesson even when students seemed to already know what to do.
- In the best lessons observed, students were fully challenged by work that is modified to accommodate individual needs. However, teacher practice is inconsistent across classrooms and does not reflect a cohesive approach that supports differentiation. Similarly, some student notebooks and work folders do not show sufficient evidence of tiered supports to ensure consistent progress for struggling or high-achieving learners. It is therefore unclear if the current strategies are setting a path towards mastery of skill and content for all groups of students.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Expectations for delivering the Common Core Learning Standards-based curriculum are clear and supported well by pacing calendars and instructional guides that include progress-monitoring checkpoints.

Impact

The school's curricular decisions build effective decision making around teaching and learning.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal has highlighted and color-coded standards that teachers need to teach based on the recent item analysis of the State examinations and have categorized group of students, particularly English language learners (ELL) and special education students in order for teams to plan additional interventions. Vertical teams use this chart to plan which standards they need to teach students, including both the present grade and the grade below and to supplement lessons when necessary. Teachers' use of these resources results in focused instruction that supports student mastery and ensures what is being taught and the connection to the Common Core Learning Standards.
- The school is in partnership with another school in the district that shares a literacy consultant from Creative Solutions Services. Over the summer, staff and administration from both schools met to align the ReadyGEN program. The 2014-2015 Literacy Curriculum Map serves as a required planning tool against which they need to align units of study. Teachers' receipt of additional documents relative to the Common Core Learning Standards enables staff to see the State's vertical grade expectations. In each module there is the correlating standard that students are supposed to master. Such approaches to curricula development result in a focused attention to planning instruction that supports student mastery.
- Curriculum maps in literacy and math are in place for the entire school year with a listing of the Common Core Learning Standards addressed. The units are based on student competency as indicated on the State assessments. In math, teachers looked at the state item analysis and those standards to see where it was covered in the GO Math! program. Administration also analyzed where students had challenges and made priority standards. These curriculum maps are known as living documents and can be edited and adjusted as the school year progresses. This attention in aligning the school's curriculum is resulting in students accelerating their progress towards attaining learning targets, as evidenced in the post-assessment data of the first unit tests in literacy and math.

Findings

Assessments and rubrics school-wide are loosely aligned with the school curricula and lesson and unit plans inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

Data from assessments inform limited feedback to students and provide some of them with reasons for their success and next steps for improvement. Teachers inconsistently make effective adjustments to meet students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Grade level inquiry teams meet regularly to examine work and discuss next steps. However, there is not a specified school protocol that enables them to uniformly analyze the work of students across grade and content areas, which results in reduced teacher capacity to extend and enhance learning beyond the classroom.
- The school analyzes a plethora of data from multiple school-wide assessments and end of unit assessments. However, there was no evidence in the rigor of analysis of using these assessments for identifying subgroup of students, particularly those students who are performing at or above grade level. Consequently, the school is not developing a clear picture in targeting subgroups for academic enrichment.
- Although rubrics are evident in all classrooms, they are varied according to the particular subject. In addition, there are two different rubrics used for math with one rubric that does not use numerical levels. It is the principal's expectations that student feedback is specific to the task and next steps for improvement are based on the rubric. However, teacher feedback is not consistently matched with detailed comments made on student work. In turn, students are generally not able to fully explain what they do well and do not understand next learning steps to do better. This hampers the school's capacity to explicitly identify individual student's strengths and areas of need. In turn, these classroom level assessments cannot be used consistently to monitor student progress and adjust goals for subgroups of students.

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

Teachers benefit from participating in professional collaborations that foster reflection as well as providing options for researching effective instructional techniques.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has strengthened instruction and raised learning outcomes.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet collaboratively within their grade more than once a week through the school's common prep scheduling. In addition, the principal has also afforded teams with per-session opportunities for them to meet before and after school. They share their findings of previous interventions, which were collaboratively created, and also share ideas for multiple entry points, implementation of curricula, assessment and provide modifications for learning styles. The school has also created vertical teams for staff to examine curricula in all subject areas and provide coherence. This in-depth review of intra- and inter-grade curricula ensures coherence and consistency across all grades throughout the school.
- At the grade 5 teacher team meeting, teachers were analyzing the chapter 3 post-assessments, particularly the percentages of students who scored Levels 1-4, focusing on the ELLs, special education students and students scoring in the lowest third. They used the Objective, Reflective, Interpretive, Decisional (ORID) protocol chart to share their class results. Based on the student responses, teachers suggested incorporating more vocabulary, which is the school's focus, and to give students more multi-step problems. Teachers also decided to change the math problem of the day to include Form B types of problems and to have children work in partners. As a result, this is building a reflective collaborative community that grows an increased focus on student learning.
- The data specialist, who is a member of the Administrative Core Instructional Team to promote coherent sharing of information, facilitates every grade team meeting. They support the team with various resources, data and research, which leads to staff establishing a school-wide structure of identifying, targeting and assessing students throughout the school.