Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Hamilton Heights School
06M368
1750 Amsterdam Avenue
New York
NY 10031

Principal: Michelle Herbowy
Date of review: December 11, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Manuel Ramirez
The School Context

Hamilton Heights School is an elementary school with 236 students from grade Kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 24% Black, 59% Hispanic, 10% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 22% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 93.0%.

School Quality Criteria

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

The principal consistently communicates high expectations to staff via the use of the Danielson Framework for teaching. Consistent communication and updates keep families apprised of students’ progress toward college and career readiness.

Impact

The school’s culture for learning has created awareness of the progress students are making towards meeting their academic goals and engaged families in helping students meet expectations for their next grade.

Supporting Evidence

- Parents shared that teachers’ constant contact is an invaluable resource in keeping them abreast of how their children are doing in the classroom. One parent said, “Teachers are always calling using their own cellphones to tell me about my daughter.” They stated that a 2nd grade newsletter, 3rd grade Blog and the school’s Facebook page allow them to keep track of their children’s performance in school.

- The principal consistently communicates with staff regarding school expectations for learning and professionalism in the form of memos and emails. For example, teachers are informed of expectations via a weekly calendar and reminders that are linked to targeted domains of the Danielson Framework. Scheduled professional development cycles connected to specific domains of the Danielson Framework for Teaching support teachers towards meeting the expectations.

- The principal uses classroom observations and feedback from classroom visits to hold staff accountable for meeting instructional expectations. For example, teachers’ observation reports showed specific next steps and timelines for follow up on each next step.

- The school provided parents and students with a chart detailing the Common Core Learning Standards during a “Curriculum Night” and school documents show that there is ongoing communication with families regarding expectations for their children.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: | Developing |

Findings

Instructional practices across classrooms visited did not consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula. Evidence of higher order thinking and participation among students varied across the classes visited.

Impact

Across classrooms instructional practices did not support all students in producing high quality work products and there were uneven levels of student participation in meaningful discussions in lessons across content areas.

Supporting Evidence

- A few teachers in classrooms visited engaged students in peer to peer discussions. For example, in a science class all students sat in a circle highly engaged in peer to peer discussion of the relationships between different parts of the ecosystem. Similarly, in a social studies class students participated in a gallery walk reviewing historical artifacts and then sharing insights with peers in a discussion. This high level of thinking and participation in discussion was not noted in other classrooms where the lessons involved a teacher-student-teacher question and answer, with only a few students responding when asked to do so.

- In a third grade English Language Arts class and a fourth grade math class it was noted that not all students were engaged in the lesson as many students were not listening to each other nor paying attention to the teachers’ explanations and directions. In addition, in most classrooms, there was no evidence of differentiated instruction, with all students completing the same task.

- In an English Language Arts class, students were purposely grouped for a reading assignment that required them to read their leveled text and respond in writing to what they had read; however the lesson did not challenge all learners. Some students were observed “flipping” through pages while a few others engaged in unrelated conversations with fellow group members.

- In a 5th grade math class, the teacher used a model to explain different models for multiplication. The Rectangle used to model the math concept did not match the mathematical facts for “length” and “area”, causing a lack of understanding and confusion among students.
### Additional Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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#### Findings

The principal and staff are in the process of aligning curricula to Common Core Learning Standards Instructional Shifts to create academic tasks to engage a diversity of learners across classrooms and content areas.

#### Impact

Curricula and academic tasks do not yet reflect planning to provide all students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, with access to cognitively engaging learning experiences across content areas.

#### Supporting Evidence

- The principal uses Mondays for professional development opportunities to engage teachers in collaborative mapping of curricula with the goal of aligning units and tasks to the Common Core Learning Standards and incorporating the Instructional Shifts. However, while there are curriculum maps and unit plans that offer pathways for coherent instruction in math, for all other content areas units are currently in the developing stage.

- Teacher teams are in the planning process for implementing protocols to analyze students’ work and to use the data to inform adjustments to units of instruction. In addition, reviews of instructional plans showed little evidence of the use of data to plan for differentiated instruction or to determine targeted strategies that would be used to increase student achievement across grades and content areas.

- Lesson plans do not consistently reflect planning to meet the diverse needs of different subgroups of students. The principal indicated that the school is just beginning to create curriculum maps so refinement of curricula to improve access by English Language Learners and students with disabilities will occur later in the school year.

- In several of the lesson plans reviewed it was noted that lesson plans lacked clear learning objectives to drive coherent instruction. For example, in one of the lesson plans reviewed the learning objective read, “Revising your work with your writing partner.”
Findings

Although the school administers assessments to evaluate students’ learning needs, assessments do not yet yield feedback that informs students about their progress nor result in adjustments to curricula and instruction that address students’ learning needs.

Impact

All students do not consistently receive actionable feedback that informs them about their performance and next steps across content areas. Teachers inconsistently make effective adjustments to meet student’s learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal has indicated that the school has begun to implement assessments such as Measures of Student Learning, Running Records and end of unit tests and is in the process of developing benchmark assessments aligned to Common Core Learning Standards.

- Most classrooms visited had student’s portfolio that included work samples; however, a few students articulated that some work samples had just been compiled to form their portfolios so they had not received any feedback from the teacher. They also stated that they did not use rubrics regularly in their classes and were not clear how to improve their work. In addition, bulletin boards and classroom visits did not show evidence of student self-assessment as an embedded practice across grades.

- Across classrooms visited checks for understanding were not consistently evident. For example, in a math class, the “Do Now” was focused on getting students to understand the concepts of “area” and “perimeter” but a check for understanding involved only a few students who were asked to share their response. As the lesson progressed, it was clear that the majority of students were not familiar enough with the concept to engage meaningfully in the group work assigned.

- Teachers are beginning to understand how to analyze data to determine students’ strengths and challenges; however there was no evidence of teachers engaging in activities such as in-depth item analysis to identify key standards by grade level that need to be addressed via adjustments to the curriculum and /or targeted small group instruction.
Quality Indicator: 4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development  Rating: Developing

Findings

Although teacher teams meet weekly and are beginning to analyze student work, teacher team practices are loosely connected to school goals and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts.

Impact

Teacher teamwork has not yet improved instructional practices across grades and content areas nor resulted in progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence:

- Teacher teams meet weekly to analyze students' work and share instructional practices; however, teachers were not able to articulate how this work is connected to the school’s goals, instructional focus and the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. One teacher noted that their meeting “cycle started just a few weeks ago”.

- Teachers noted that the team meetings are beginning to drive their work in the planning and implementation of instructional practices. However, the principal indicated that although she even models instructional practices at times, further work is needed in order for teachers to complete units for all core content areas and incorporate the instructional shifts.

- Teachers reported that the Network math and English Language Arts coaches, as well as the principal, usually lead the teacher team meetings during the Monday professional development session, supporting them in their work.

- Teacher teams meet during different days of the week depending on the grade level. However, there was minimal evidence of use of protocols to guide teamwork and engage all participants in meaningful and productive conversations.