



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Abram Stevens Hewitt School

Public School 130

**750 Prospect Avenue
Bronx
NY 10455**

Principal: Daniel Garcia

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Reviewer: Chip Morrison

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 130 is a neighborhood elementary school currently serving 700 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. Approximately 76% of students are Hispanic, 23% Black, and 1% from other groups. About 5% of students are in self-contained special education classrooms. The school receives Title I funding, as nearly all students (98%) are eligible.

While 30% of students are identified as English language learners, most of the students come from homes where a language other than English is spoken. The school has operated a dual language program (two-way bilingual) for the past three years. One class at each grade level receives two days of instruction in Spanish and two days in English each week, with the remaining day taught in either English or Spanish, depending on the teacher's judgment.

With the addition of a 5th grade last year, the school is currently operating at 113% of its rated capacity. A new set of early-childhood playgrounds surrounding the building, funded by a large grant provided by Land for the Public Trust and designed with input from students, is scheduled for completion by the end of 2006.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is a strong instructional leader and a skillful change agent who makes especially good use of available resources to support teaching and learning.
- School leaders have established an effective system of support for professional development.
- The school attracts and retains a dynamic and dedicated faculty.
- Excellent use is made of a broad range of assessment systems to monitor student progress and differentiate instruction to identified needs.
- The school has an especially strong and innovative science program, which fully includes special education students.
- A full range of academic support services effectively supports students.
- The school provides a valuable service as a resource center for the surrounding community.
- The school makes effective use of partnerships with external organizations and vendors.
- An especially effective system for small-group learning maximizes student engagement and peer-to-peer learning.
- The school outperforms many other elementary schools in the region in English language arts and mathematics.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to work on higher-order thinking skills, conceptual learning, and accountable talk, especially in mathematics.
- Continue to work on writing skills across the curriculum and further develop the review of significant student written work as a focus for professional learning and student assessment.
- Expand the use of classroom observation as a way of further enhancing professional learning.
- Implement regular planning cycles with measurable interim goals for student learning.
- Extend the use of technology to include a broader range of skills and activities.
- Evaluate the impact that particular programs and strategies have on student achievement.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

Under the expert guidance of the principal, who has served the community in this position for 18 years, the school has established a full range of systems, processes, and structures that strongly support learning for teachers and students. These include several systems for computer-assisted instruction and diagnostic assessment and a well-established system for encouraging widespread independent reading. There is a full range of academic support services for struggling students.

Intensive mentoring and monitoring of new teachers combined with numerous professional development opportunities for all teachers support instruction. The principal and his leadership team acknowledge the need for more conceptual understanding in mathematics, further professional learning opportunities focused on the review of lessons and student work; and the use of technology as a tool for learning that goes beyond computer-assisted instruction and testing.

At the same time, instructional leaders are especially sensitive to the need for school community members to feel in control of the changes they make. While there are some 'non-negotiables', teachers are given a large measure of freedom to create and experiment. Successful innovations gradually make their way into common practice. The challenge is to find a balance between thoughtful 'top-down' initiatives and grassroots innovation. There is every indication that school leadership is up to this challenge.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school makes good use of the student performance data supplied by State and City testing programs. For example, the principal does not just compare the performance of students in a given grade against that of students in the same grade the previous year, or the performance of his school compared to similar schools; he also looks at individual student data from one year to the next to track growth over time, and in this way is able to estimate the educational value of the contributions made by individual teachers at each grade level and within each subject area. This information is shared with teachers, so that they can see how they are doing in comparison to their colleagues. The principal generates reports for classroom teachers showing clearly how each student performed on the most recent standardized tests, so teachers can see which students are performing at the bottom, middle, and top of each performance band. In this way, the 'pushable' and 'slippable' students are easily identified.

Beyond its use of annual standardized test data, the school makes especially good use of a set of computerized systems that combine differentiated instruction on basic skills with the collection of data on skill acquisition. These systems generate data that is used to

track academic progress on a weekly or even daily basis. At least four systems are regularly used for this purpose.

Finally, instructional leaders acknowledge a desire to become more accurate in their approach to student assessment. This means helping teachers become keen observers of student learning in situ, rather than just taking account of test results. Although there are significant strengths in the analysis of some data, there is less attention focus on looking at how different ethnic groups or girls and boys perform, and to setting goals and targets for such groups of students.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student’s next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student’s learning.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

There is a strong commitment to helping each student move forward academically. While the ultimate goal is to have all students meeting or exceeding State standards, the day-to-day focus is on identifying where individual students are academically and then targeting instruction to those specific needs. The various computerized tutorial and testing systems are well used for this purpose.

The primary focus is on setting goals for the growth of individual students. Goal setting is especially pronounced in reading. Many teachers are from the Teach for America program, and have adopted the program’s goal of moving every student forward one and a half grade levels each year. Annual goals for individual student reading levels are posted outside the door of every classroom, along with a chart illustrating the growth toward this goal, so that students also know how well they are doing. There is as yet no equivalent system for mathematics.

To help meet identified needs, students receive a full range of academic support services. These include one-on-one and small-group tutoring during the school day, during the 37.5 minute extended-day period, after school, and on Saturdays. Considerable efforts go into helping parents support their children’s learning. Teachers send a homework schedule to parents at the start of the week so that parents can monitor homework completion. Students are also required to read independently for at least 15 minutes each day at home, and parents are required to monitor this and sign off using a provided form. During parent-teacher conferences, teachers explain where the child is academically, what the specific goals are, and what is being done to help ensure that these goals can be met. As a result, parents have a better understanding of what they can do to help.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

The principal and his instructional leadership team put a great deal of thought into ensuring that teachers have the resources and materials they need to help students cover the mandated curriculum. This is especially true in the area of English language arts. The principal has a strong background in early literacy and is well-versed in the relevant

research literature, and gives a strong lead this curriculum area. The centerpiece of the school's mission to help all children become independent readers is a program of guided reading that uses fiction and non-fiction that is identified by reading level. Expectations are made clear, and individual progress charts are posted outside each classroom. In this way, not only can teachers monitor student progress closely, but students can assess their own progress, and participate in the decision of when they are ready to move up a level. Some teachers use an analytic scoring rubric, but this is not consistent across grade levels for subject areas. The use of student portfolios is also not consistent.

The school uses the City's preferred mathematics program, supplemented by computerized tutorials. Teachers appear to be focused primarily on helping students develop procedural and factual knowledge. The content of many lessons revolves around students doing a series of short-answer problems in workbooks. Students can be seen helping each other, but there is not much evidence of accountable talk or carefully documented solutions to open-ended multi-step problems. There is an unusually strong science program. All special education students, including those in self-contained classrooms, take full part in the science program. Well over half of students are performing at or above grade level in science.

The school has established an approach to small-group learning that involves careful composition of heterogeneous groups based on achievement level. Each student is assigned a task so all are involved. Many teachers also follow a practice of asking a question, then having students turn to a partner to try out their answer before stating it more publicly. Teachers also ask students to signal whether they understood a question by giving 'thumbs up' or 'thumbs down.' As a result of these and similar strategies, student engagement is generally excellent throughout the school.

The principal makes excellent use of available financial, human, and physical resources as part of his ongoing budgeting and resource management process. He successfully maximizes the adult-to-student ratio. For example, the hiring of the same substitute teachers every day and assigning them to particular teachers, acculturates them into the daily routines and life of the school. This gets an extra adult in the classroom, and also provides flexibility when it is needed, for example, to take advantage of a professional development opportunity. Academic support staff also 'push-in' to the classroom on a regular basis. Parent volunteers and paraprofessionals are used widely. As a result, it is not unusual to see three or four adults in the same room with twenty-or-so students, allowing them to meet the needs of individual students.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is well-developed, with some proficient features.

Through its participation in the Teach for America program and the City's Teaching Fellows program, the school manages to attract and retain a large number of energetic, well-educated young teachers. School leaders are especially skilful at monitoring and mentoring teachers, and providing them with a range of opportunities for professional development. As a result, the school functions as a training ground of choice for teachers who are new to the profession and want an opportunity to develop their skills in a school that has a solid track record of success in helping students be successful academically.

As noted above, the principal and his leadership team use a 'value-added' approach to the use of student performance data, thus bringing in an important element of individual accountability. The emphasis is on helping all teachers be successful by getting them whatever help they may need to further their professional growth. Supports including modeling and mentoring by the support staff, visits to other teachers' classrooms in the school, and professional development opportunities outside the building. Although some steps have been taken to establish formal lesson observations as an additional context for professional learning, considerable work remains to be done to make this part of the school culture.

The school has a partnership with the Citizens Advice Bureau which helps the school offer a range of after-school programs in theater, music, and art. The New York City Learning Leaders Program helps train parent volunteers. The United Bronx Parents and Mothers On the Move work together to conduct various parent workshops based upon assessed parent needs.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

As noted above, this school has a general aim of moving all students forward academically and does an especially good job of doing this and monitoring progress on a regular basis. Teachers are expected to pay close attention to growth in sub-skills and tailor instruction for individual students accordingly. Many teachers use a spreadsheet template to record the progress of individual students in mathematics and language arts, again by sub-skill.

While the school does not set specific goals for groups of students beyond goals for adequate yearly progress mandated by the State and federal legislation, it does set, and carefully monitor, goals for individual students, with the thinking that by focusing closely on the progress of individuals, aggregate achievement will necessarily improve for all groups.

Instructional leaders have evidence that their various programs and instructional strategies, considered as a whole, are having a positive impact on student learning. However, the school does not yet have ways of teasing out the impact of particular strategies on these results. To take just one example, it is not clear exactly what effect the use of particular computerized instructional systems has on overall achievement. As a result, it is hard to conduct any kind of cost-benefit analysis of these systems, thus potentially limiting the impact of the overall budget for improvement strategies.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Abram Stevens Hewitt School (PS 130)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score			X

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each student, classroom, grade level, 			X
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ethnic groups, English Language Learners, special education students* 		X	
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all other categories of interest to the school* 			X
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.		X	
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.		X	
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.			X
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.			X
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.			X
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.			X
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.			X
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X