



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Howard Beach School

Elementary-Middle School 146

98-01 159 Avenue

Queens

NY 11414

Principal: Mary Reilly

Dates of review: April 16 - 17, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Diana Shepherd

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Howard Beach School is an elementary-middle school with 605 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 7. The school population comprises 4% Black, 26% Hispanic, 66% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 4.9% English language learners and 22.5% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 93.5%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Conferencing in reading and writing is a strong feature of instruction and teachers use these well to support all students' learning.
- The school disaggregates data effectively and therefore understands the comparative achievement of all individuals and groups of students.
- Communication with parents is good and letters give information on goals and guidance on next steps for learning.
- The introduction of Core Knowledge is supporting the integration of learning across the curriculum.
- The introduction of smart boards is making a positive difference to the instructional opportunities and students are motivated as a result.
- Observations of teachers by the coach and administration are thorough and inform the professional development of both new and experienced teachers.
- Effective coaching for teachers in the early childhood grades results in good achievement for these students.

What the school needs to improve

- Use benchmarking information thoroughly in order to improve strategic planning for raising achievement of all students.
- Ensure that all plans for development include objective and measurable interim goals.
- Build on the work with teachers to ensure that all instruction is consistently differentiated for all students.
- Use data strategically to plan for the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning.
- Ensure that all teachers include the next steps for learning in plans for improving achievement.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made some progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

The Howard Beach School is a large and growing school in Howard Beach. It serves a stable community and although it has many special education students, there are very few English language learners. It has made some progress since the last Quality Review in dealing with the issues identified. In particular, boys' achievement has remained a focus and the school is having some success. Teachers set short-term goals for students, which students understand and work well to accomplish. Data collection is good but its use remains strongest in the early grades and peer evaluation is still a work in progress. Interventions, however, are used well and in a focused manner to the benefit of all teachers. The inquiry team has looked in depth at the progress made by students at risk and the impact of academic intervention. The administration is currently considering ways this work can influence the achievement of students at risk. The school uses Acuity well to inform progress towards goals and good staff training has resolved initial problems. The school uses data well to inform planning and to monitor student progress. However, the administration is aware that it must consider the ways teachers use this information to plan consistently differentiated instruction across all grades. Teachers benchmark reading achievement well and parents and students understand the process. The recent introduction of the Core Knowledge curriculum is very popular. Teachers and students enjoy the integration of subjects, which offers a more purposeful context for learning. The administration links professional development to whole school goals and to individual needs, which is effective and all teachers feel well supported. Communication throughout the school community is good and parents make an active contribution to the school's work. Behavior and attendance are both good, which the school works diligently to maintain. The school plans strategically for change and is currently planning the move from serving exclusively elementary students to including middle school students. They are managing this process well. However, the plans for improving achievement, although reasonably thorough for reading, are not sufficiently focused or measurable to bring about improvements in progress for all students in all subject areas.

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 the student's progress over time.

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

The school uses data well to understand the performance of all students. In addition to the assessment information collected by teachers, the school uses Acuity and Scantron to develop a deeper understanding of the specific areas for improvement for groups and individual students. In particular the large population of special education students have

benefited from the introduction of this lens, which has enabled teachers to understand and plan more effectively for their needs, enabling them to make good growth even when included in general education classes. This is also the case for the small group of English language learners, who are taught through English immersion, but do get some additional support from a specialist teacher. The school has identified gender differences in achievement as an important factor and has planned very carefully to address this. As a result of a longitudinal study, they have identified specific issues related to English language arts and social studies and are planning systematically to remedy these. The school uses all data to measure its own progress over time and to build an objective picture of overall performance. This has been important as the school has been growing in size for several years and will be a full elementary and middle school by the start of the 2008-2009 school year. They benchmark their performance against similar schools in the area as well as their peer horizon, but this does not yet provide sufficient rigor or challenge, particularly in the area of strategic planning. As part of the focus on technology, the school has ensured teachers and administrators receive good training in order to manage the new data tools effectively. This training is ongoing and ensures that as new developments are received, they are integrated smoothly into the school's work.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

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

Whole school goals are set in the Comprehensive Education Plan and inform the goals set within grades. Teachers work together to set goals for individual students within grades and these are monitored and adjusted through reading and writing conferences. The literacy coach in the early grades works very effectively alongside teachers to ensure that the process is rigorous and challenging for all students. Academic intervention in class is provided for any student who is not making the expected progress. At risk students also attend Saturday school and after school activities whose impact the school monitors carefully. The Read 180 program has proven particularly effective with boys and the inquiry team is carefully looking at the program's impact. Academic intervention has been particularly successful in moving the level 1 students. In the early grades, the school also uses retention as an intervention, judging it more effective than other strategies as it takes account of maturity issues. This has frequently proven successful and the school retains fewer students in the later grades as a result. The close focus on individual performance shows that many students are at the grade level thresholds. This information has enabled teachers to focus specifically on these students' needs and to involve students through conferencing in understanding the next steps they need to take on order to make the grade.

Communication is good throughout the school and administration has a range of effective means to ensure that everyone is aware of test results and goals for further improvement. The Parents Association has been a strong support in this work. They provide updated information for parents through their website. 'Meet the staff' nights and the well-conceived 'Head Start' packs ensure that all parents understand the school's expectations and their contribution to successful outcomes. The school organizes a range of well-attended events both to inform and to entertain parents. Parents feel well informed and are confident that their children are safe and supported to achieve well.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

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

The school has worked successfully to embed the workshop model into the practice of all teachers. In the early grades, teachers are using Foundations well to develop phonological skills, which they find to be very successful and motivating for students. In these grades, writing goals are evident in books and students can articulate them. Students and teachers are highly motivated by the addition of smart boards, which have proven particularly effective for math instruction. The Core Knowledge curriculum has just been introduced and is already evident in the examples of well-integrated work around the school, in particular integrating writing, art and social studies. This curriculum has been introduced this year and it will, therefore, need further embedding over time in order to demonstrate real impact on achievement overall.

The school holds teachers accountable. The administration regularly observes instruction informally, dropping in but always giving feedback. Formal observations are thorough and always include pre- and post conferences to define expectations and determine next steps for development. New teachers and those who are the subject of concern receive more observations that are formal. A focus of all monitoring is differentiated instruction, which is evident in many classes. However, there are some instances, particularly in the higher grades, where whole-class instruction prevails and the school needs to ensure that instruction across the grades is consistently differentiated to meet the needs of all students. There is clear evidence throughout the school that the administration uses its budget to meet the priorities identified through data analysis. The introduction of smart boards and Core Knowledge exemplify this. Relationships across the school are good. Parents are amazed that the principal knows all the students’ names, which they appreciate. Students and staff refer to the school as a family and the collaborative culture builds trust and respect. Students enjoy being in school as a result and attendance is generally good. The school reinforces this through positive strategies that further motivate students to be in school.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

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

The administrators share observations of teachers. This builds their skills and ensures objectivity in judgments. The needs of teachers, as well as those of the whole school, drive the professional development program. For example, significant time has been allocated to learning about smart boards and the Core Knowledge curriculum. The success of this is particularly evident in the confident use of smart boards by all teachers. Math and literacy coaches work very closely with teachers to ensure that they can meet their needs successfully. This is particularly successful in literacy for the early grades. The school is aware of the need to bring in a literacy coach for the remaining grades and see this as part of their development work. Common preps ensure close collaboration and there is a clear focus for each session, ensuring that all aspects of business are accomplished. The Core Knowledge coach meets each grade team weekly in well-conducted and informative forums. New teachers have mentors and receive help from the coaches to develop their practice. The school has nine new teachers, which provides

more experienced teachers with opportunities to act as mentors and to share good practice. The new teachers appreciate the support they receive. There are good systems to ensure that all students get appropriate support to ensure their learning. The student personnel committee coordinates this work well, in consultation with the individual staff identified on each floor as the first point of contact for all social and emotional issues raised by students. Parents are fully involved in the process, which ensures a level of success. The school is effectively organized and all members of the community know the protocols and abide by them well. Generally, students are well behaved and show respect but there is a clear and shared policy relating to infractions, which the school follows consistently to ensure that serious incidents do not happen often. The school is supported by local partnerships, which offer financial support as well as an after school program, which is well received by the parents and students.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school thoroughly evaluates its Comprehensive Education Plan and the success of each year's work. They revise the whole school goals through this process and the outcomes inform the goals for each grade. The clear overview of student achievement, which includes benchmarks throughout the year, and the plans for improving teachers' practice are an important element of whole school planning. However, for the most part, the goals set are not measurable and, where they are, the measures are too general to be helpful. For example, '75-80% of all students will...' Teachers and administrators use Acuity and Scantron to measure the effectiveness of plans and to revise them as necessary. Despite some initial issues, Acuity is providing useful information that ensures accurate evidence for judgments. The literacy coach in the early grades supports teachers to use these tools well. In addition, the administration has built standardized assessments into their monitoring process for all students, in particular those at risk, in order to ensure that teachers' judgments are consistent. This has been a useful strategy. Assessment for literacy is good and the school has responded strategically to ensure that the information collected through conferencing is comprehensive. This has contributed well to the goal-setting process in all grades. The goals set in the Comprehensive Plan are goals revised in the light of data, but as in other plans, the interim measures are too general and do not significantly impact on the progress of all students in all subject areas. The principal has a clear vision for the future of the school and she has worked systematically with all members of the community to enable them to share it. She recognizes that the leadership team needs to be augmented and has brought in an additional assistant principal to work with the upper grades and help to manage the change.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Howard Beach School	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
Quality Score				X	

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

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?				X	
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?			X		
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X	

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?				X	
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?				X	
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?			X		
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?			X		
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?				X	
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4					X

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?			X		
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?			X		
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?			X		
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5					X

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped