



# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**John Ericsson School**

**Intermediate School 126**

**424 Leonard Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11222**

**Principal: Dr Sheldon Toback**

**Dates of review: April 23 – 25, 2007**

**Reviewer: John Hudson**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

This intermediate school provides an education for approximately 700 students from grade 6 to grade 8. Almost two-thirds of the students are from Hispanic backgrounds, one in five is Black, approximately 15% are White and about 2% are Asian. Just fewer than 10% of students are English language learners and about 9% are special education students. English and Spanish are the main languages spoken.

The proportion of students with Title 1 eligibility, at 70%, is higher than is usually found throughout the City. Attendance, at 91%, is about average for the city.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal, who leads the school very well, is highly respected by staff, students and parents.
- The administration ensures the school is a safe, well-ordered learning environment.
- Collaborative planning meetings focus on improving student learning towards the achievement of challenging goals.
- There is much good practice in the use of available data to align instruction to the needs of students.
- Programs to improve the performance of English language learners, special education students, and others in need of improvement are effective.
- Adults have very good relationships with students who feel confident about asking for help when it is needed.
- Students develop mature, well considered views and opinions, which they share with confidence.
- Absences are followed up rigorously to ensure students are in school and ready to learn.

### What the school needs to improve

- Continue the process of developing the regular use of interim assessments across all subject areas and grades.
- Continue to develop the recording and analysis of current data on student achievement.
- Further develop the use of data to differentiate instruction to match the needs of individual learners and enable them to meet challenging end of year goals.
- Continuously track the performance of students to recognize under performance at an early stage.
- Compare the school's performance in all subject areas and grades with performance in similar schools.
- Extend teacher self and peer evaluation to enhance the identification of professional development needs within the context of school goals and plans.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is proficient with well-developed features.**

The school makes very effective use of available data to match work to the developing needs of students. Some areas of the curriculum are better developed than others and the school is introducing regular, systematic assessment to enable student progress to be more closely tracked. Special education students, English language learners and students in greatest need for improvement are closely tracked. Performance by ethnic group is not tracked often enough, limiting opportunity for early identification of underperformance. Where achievement is carefully monitored, students' next learning steps are understood and individual and group programs are modified accordingly.

The school has high expectations for all students to succeed and takes great care to align the mandated curriculum and other resources to their developing needs. Classrooms are stimulating learning environments, students are cared for and respected and attendance is good. The principal and his staff take a close interest in the development of each student and resources are used to well to enable them to achieve to their full potential.

For the last two years the school has shared its accommodation with a high school that uses all the fourth floor of the building and shares some classrooms on the third floor. The high school enrollment is growing and its need for space is increasing

#### **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 proficient.**

The school makes good use of State test data, portfolios, attendance and behavior records and other information to develop a clear understanding of the changing academic and personal development of all its students. There are good examples of the use of regular interim assessments, and some of the analysis of data is impressive. Particular care is taken to gain a deep understanding of student performance in some subject areas. The mathematics and English language arts departments use end of unit tests, with a frequency of between four to six weeks, to assess interim performance and track progress. The progress of special education students and English language learners is also monitored closely. The school is planning to introduce regular, three-monthly assessment across grades 6 to 8 in English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. This will enable the school to monitor student academic progress more systematically.

The progress of the respective ethnic groups enrolled in the school is not analyzed with sufficient rigor and the needs of students whose progress falls below expectations may not be identified quickly enough. The school takes particular care monitoring the progress of individual students it has identified as being in greatest need of improvement.

The principal and his senior staff make comparisons of progress within classrooms and across classrooms and use this information to establish what the school is doing well, and

where it needs to improve. The progress of individuals, classes and grades is monitored over time as they move upwards through the school. The administration uses available data to monitor the school's performance in English language arts, mathematics and science against the performance of similar schools and City schools.

**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.**

A great deal of discussion takes place amongst members of the school's administration, in subject departments and in collaborative planning meetings about the academic and personal needs of all students. The school keeps individual students, classrooms and grades under review and sets short-term and longer-term demanding, objectively measurable but achievable goals to keep students at a level that is closely matched to their abilities. The principal and his staff are aware of the considerable value of careful analysis to identify weaknesses promptly and determine what next steps need to be taken.

Goals and plans are set with particular care to support English language learners, special education students and individual students the school has identified as being in greatest need of improvement. Members of staff take part in regular discussions over the need to continuously fine tune lesson plans to meet individual student needs more effectively and ensure students meet longer term goals.

Good relationships with parents and caregivers enable the school to take effective action over any concerns with attendance, punctuality or lower than expected academic performance. Teachers discuss progress with students individually and as a result students know that their performance is being tracked at home and at school. This raises their expectations and encourages them to take increasing responsibility for their own learning.

The school takes care to ensure students are given opportunities to develop their self esteem. This is done through good use of group discussions in some classrooms and carefully targeted teacher questioning in some class discussions. As a result, students develop higher order thinking skills and well considered views and opinions

**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 school continues to review and revise its curriculum units, which are aligned with the mandated curriculum, to ensure student achievement is accurately assessed at regular intervals throughout the year. Results are recorded and analyzed so that progress of individual students and groups can be tracked towards the achievement of longer term goals.

The principal and his senior team use data to measure the effectiveness of teachers, who are held accountable for the progress of each student. Teachers use regular planning

meetings to continuously review and improve their skills at differentiating their instruction based on the needs of individual students. Lesson plans of all teachers are routinely checked by the administration to ensure they remain consistent with school procedures. The learning plans for special education students and English language learners are good examples of this process, as there are in other subject areas.

The use of data to fine tune curriculum units and lesson plans to make instruction more relevant to the needs of individual students and groups of students ensures very good student engagement. In consequence, learners strive to succeed. Whole school planning enables the school to make good use of its budget to target staff and other resources to where they are most needed. Teachers create stimulating learning environments with up-to-date displays of student work. Scheduling based on student performance data provides special education students, English language learners and other groups with excellent support. Group sizes are adjusted to a maximum of 24 students with smaller numbers in groups including students in greatest need of improvement.

Teachers know their students well and levels of trust are high. Students feel confident they can ask teachers for help, if they need it. Students are happy in school. There is mutual respect between staff and students. Attendance has improved over recent years.

**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.**

The principal is very determined to build a talented staff team and takes considerable care over staff selection. Teachers are observed teaching and are selected on the basis of their professional skills, the way they relate to students and their ability to work collaboratively. All staff are strongly focused on helping students to achieve their potential. Teachers are required to make good use of all available performance data, including portfolios of graded work. Some use of data is of a very high order. Regular planning, department and grade review meetings compare student outcomes, revise curriculum and lesson plans and take great care to ensure academic targets are met.

The school uses performance data to identify strengths and areas for improvement in teacher skills. This is augmented by a regular program of formal classroom observations by the principal and his assistants, with feedback to teachers, supported by frequent informal classroom observations. Self- and peer-evaluation is being developed to involve all members of staff and ensure professional development is well targeted and set within established school goals and plans.

The principal, who is highly respected by staff, students and parents, is highly visible around the school and visits classrooms regularly. He encourages the sharing of best practices in the classroom and there are many very good examples of high quality teaching that address the learning needs of individual students.

Staff, students and parents are enthusiastic about their school, which is very well-organized with clear procedures that are followed by all. Students in grade 8 are sad about having to leave the school but feel confident that they are well prepared for entry to high school.

**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 proficient.**

The school makes good use of assessment data to evaluate the progress of individuals and groups of students. When appropriate, plans and other interventions are revised. The school is continuously improving processes to capture up-to-date assessment data on student achievement in order to meet the ever-changing needs of students.

The school does respond to changing circumstances and there is evidence that successive phases of school planning do realign school goals, plans, procedures and use of resources. The Comprehensive Education Plan is detailed and progress towards longer term goals is tracked annually. The program of interim assessments enables the school to respond rapidly and flexibly to changing needs.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: John Ericsson School (IS 126)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		X	

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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"> <li>each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>		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"> <li>ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students*</li> </ul>		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"> <li>all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>		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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>		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.

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			X

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X
<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X
<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>		X	