



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Herman Schreiber School

Public School 279

**1070 East 104th Street
Brooklyn
NY 11236**

Principal: Dr. Lena Richardson

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

PS 279 Herman Schreiber School, is a school with a significant decline in enrollment numbers from 1034 students in 2004, to its current student population of 838. The main reason given for this decreased in enrollment is the movement of families out of the local area and even out of state. The school consists of kindergarten through grade 5.

The school is lead by a principal who has been in post 4 years. There is a wide range of experience amongst the teachers, with a few at the early stages of their career and most others who are well established in the school.

The school population is diverse with 92% African American, 4% Hispanic, 1% White, 2% Asian, and 1% American Indian students. Eight percent are special education students and 2.5% are English language learners. Student attendance (95%) is comparable to similar schools and above the City average. The school is not Title 1 eligible.

Herman Schreiber is an empowerment school. Empowerment Schools have more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their school community. Empowerment Schools are free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with, and benefit from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The strategies developed by the principal, in collaboration with the assistant principals, and designated school leaders have been successful in establishing effective management systems to move the school forward.
- The aligned curriculum and good teaching provide good opportunities for the improvement in student learning across the curriculum.
- Teachers have created a stimulating learning environment by planning engaging lessons and making effective use of available resources.
- The school has established connectivity between the core curriculum, the extended day, and after-school programs to provide a continuum of learning opportunities for students.
- The programs of professional development are clearly linked to whole-school priorities.
- Kindergarten through grade 2 teachers use periodic assessments effectively to inform their instructional strategies and to improve student performance.
- Staff plan and work collaboratively with a high level of commitment to the school and students to raise their achievement.
- There is effective support for students with a range of needs and strengths including challenge for high achievers.
- Students appreciate the fact that staff know and support them well; they work hard, behave well, and are proud of their school.
- Student attendance is very good.

What the school needs to improve

- Give greater time and depth to monitoring and in providing teachers' feedback.
- Expand the use of periodic assessment in grades 3 through 5 to inform the performance of all groups of students.
- Differentiate instruction to make sure that all students are challenged appropriately across the curriculum.
- Create specific skill-based rubrics to inform goals and teachers' marking/grading, especially in science and in social studies.
- Formalize the review of interim and final goals through clear measurable performance indicators in the school's action plans.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The principal works well with her school's leadership team to guide the school community towards improvement and by maintaining high expectations for the students in their care. There are effective management systems to sustain the smooth running of the school in the light of declining student enrollment. The principal and her staff have established good communication across the school, among students, and with parents. They promote the school's mission to infuse a 'peace builder' culture among all stakeholders and by raising student achievement.

There is good use and analysis of data to underpin the work of the school. This is exemplified in the actions taken to refine the use of periodic assessments. The impact of assessment strategies implemented is seen in the reading improvements of kindergarten through grade 2 students. There are good examples of effective instructional practice that motivate and engage students well. Teachers across the school collaboratively meet to plan lessons and to improve their instructional strategies. They implement thoroughly a standard-based curriculum. The use of rubrics to inform marking and their own assessments is developing well. The school is extending teachers' use of rubrics in science and social studies to positively impact on their instructional strategies. Grades 3 through 5 are building on the good use and analysis of periodic assessments established in the lower grade levels. These actions are clearly outlined and targeted in the Comprehensive Education Plan to better inform the next stages of the school's development.

Parents are actively engaged in the education of their children and provide good support to their children's learning. The students feel respected, safe, and secure in the welcoming and caring environment of this school. The school actively engages its students with targeted support for those students at risk or for special education students. The needs of high achieving students are address through initiatives such as the law program and enhancement lessons which promote their progress and accelerated learning.

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 leader, intervention staff, and teachers collect a wide range of data to monitor whole school student performance and progress in reading and mathematics. Annual test and periodic assessment results are scrutinized carefully to check students' performance trends and to monitor the progress of students, such as comparisons between boys and girls, among gifted students, and for those students requiring intervention to address their specific needs. For example, periodic assessments are administered to students across the school which enables teachers to identify strengths and weaknesses in students' acquisition of language skills.

The school uses its periodic assessments and analyzed data well to identify the needs of special education students, English language learners, and for those students identified as 'at risk.' The intervention strategies, for example, are appropriately targeted for boys with low reading skills. Recent tests and assessment results indicate the good progress that these students make. Although the performance of boys and girls are analyzed, the tracking of student performance by ethnicity is not as refined.

Teachers use their own observations and the data provided from both tests and periodic assessments to check individual student progress and to identify any overall patterns in skills or concepts that students find difficult. In grades 3 through 5, for example, students' written work is analyzed to demonstrate their grasp of key literacy skills. The school collates portfolios which contain significant pieces of work and assessment information, which are used as a helpful resource to both record and check student progress over time. The school is beginning to extend the use of periodic assessments in grades 3 through 5 to better inform lesson planning and intervention strategies. The school has undertaken comparisons with similar schools over past years and continues to seek new ways of comparing and disaggregating data to better inform the work of the school and in monitoring its effectiveness.

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 proficient.

The principal has clear expectations that all students will perform to the best of their ability and build skills based on consolidated learning. These expectations are shared with the staff who are supportive and active in implementing the school's mission and goals. Priorities for improvement are identified within the Comprehensive Education Plan. However, related goals are based on a 5% notional increase in test results rather than on specific and rigorous performance indicators.

All teachers group students according to identified academic needs and set related goals for students based on the standards-based curriculum for English language arts and mathematics. Related intervention strategies are based on data analyzed at regular intervals to support those students most at risk in their literacy and numeracy learning. However, goal setting is not consistently implemented in other areas of the curriculum. Teachers are still developing subject specific rubrics in science and social studies and extending the use of periodic assessments, for example, reading assessments in grades 3 through 5. Occasionally lesson plans do not show clear learning objectives or indicate specific and differentiated groups to address the varied needs of students.

Teachers, curriculum coaches, and paraprofessionals work closely together to set meaningful and challenging goals for special education students. Individual education plans clearly identify targeted learning skills which are systematically monitored for student progress. There is, however, variance in how rigorous goals are set and reviewed which specifically identify the language acquisition and literacy skills for English language learners. The school is in the process of reviewing the rubrics used throughout the school to inform common whole school strategies. Subject content rubrics in social studies are being developed to complement the use of literacy rubrics used on a regular basis. Grade 3 science rubrics are pending completion.

Parents and students are signed up and committed to meeting the high expectations of the school. Parents fully appreciate the regular communication they receive, for example, through curriculum workshops, teacher conferences, progress reports, newsletters, and calendar of events. They feel well informed about what is happening in school and how their children are progressing.

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 curriculum is appropriately aligned with an emphasis on basic literacy and numeracy. The core curriculum is complemented by extension programs for high achievers, and after-school programs with a wide range of hands-on experiences that include both recreational and academic activities. These include violin, fieldtrips, ballroom dancing, and a law program which gives students contact with lawyers and experience of the courts and judicial system. The school learning environment of school is word rich with interactive displays in classrooms and in hall displays to promote student learning.

Teachers are held accountable in their use of periodic assessments to track student progress. Most teachers use data to inform their planning and intervention strategies for a range of student abilities. There are good examples of reading groups identified by assessed literacy skills at regular interval. The teaching of English language arts is enhanced by extensive class libraries which have designated reading levels. Mathematics skills are taught with suitable apparatus to improve students’ problem solving. However, lessons are not consistently differentiated across the curriculum to ensure that all students benefit from instruction focused on their individual academic needs.

The principal’s and leadership team’s decisions encompassing staffing, budgeting, and scheduling arrangements are clearly based on student performance and whole school priorities. Actions are guided by close scrutiny of analyzed data and test results. The principal is clear about how funds are allocated in these areas to address the whole school goals identified in the Comprehensive Education Plan.

The students are keen to succeed and they respond positively to the challenges set for them. There are positive relationships and mutual respect among all adults and students. Students are motivated to learn and they feel that staff care and value them. There is good parental support which helps to ensure that attendance remains in line with that of similar and above the average of City schools. There are good systems in place for the school to take proactive actions to reduce absence and tardiness.

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 seeks to build capacity of grade leaders who facilitate good communication and participate in collaborative planning with teachers. However, they do not have a monitoring role within their responsibilities. The principal and assistant principals have adapted their lesson observations to a 3-minute learning walk. However, this does not give depth to their observations and feedback to teachers. The school has developed

good programs of professional development clearly linked to whole-school priorities. Recent training, for example, was targeted at teachers new to the school to ensure their enculturation and to improve their instructional strategies. Teachers lead some of the focused professional development to further their own skills and to provide opportunities for building their own capacity.

The principal is well respected for her diligence and efficient running of the school on a day-to-day basis. She has established good communication with her staff, parents and the community to share and develop the school's mission for raising student achievement and for 'peace building' among the students. The principal effectively implements change that has the greatest and most positive impact on learning and to achieve these goals such as adding rigor to teachers' own assessments across the curriculum.

There are well-established links with key partners that work proactively with the school to achieve its goals for the students. For example, the school has forged links with business and community partners such as the Washington Mutual Bank and Peace Builders Organization actively promote the aims and goals of the 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's Comprehensive Education Plan outlines global whole school goals to be achieved by the end of the year and the general steps required to achieve them. The goals set are consistently based on a detailed evaluation of previous performance at each grade level, by gender, and by specific sub-groups. However, there are few interim performance indicators to accurately measure the school's success in addressing its goals.

Monthly staff meetings and interim case study meetings provide opportunities for collaborative review and analysis of interim assessments outcomes and strategies implemented to support students. These meetings promote discussions which enable the administration and staff to review the progress of students at regular intervals. However, there is variance in how formal agendas and actions points are recorded at the various meetings held across the school to better inform plans for their immediate revision.

The school regularly reviews the outcomes of periodic assessments and analyzes data, measures of the progress made are usually specific enough to inform plans for immediately revision, such as Comprehensive Education Plan goals and tasks within the school action plan.

The strategies for the continued development of subject content rubrics and the expansion of periodic assessments in grades 3 through 5 help teachers track the progress students make at a more strategic level. The principal is clear about the next steps to be taken in the goal setting process in order to improve academic outcomes for all students.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Herman Schreiber School (PS 279)	∅	✓	+
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 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	