



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Herbert S. Eisenberg School**

**Intermediate School 303**

**501 West Avenue  
New York  
NY 11224**

**Principal: Gary Ingrassia**

**Dates of review: January 10 – 12, 2007**

**Reviewer: Stephanie Krusa**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Herbert S Eisenberg School serves 893 students in grades 6 through 8. It is a Title 1 funded school. The student population is 41.6% White, 25% Hispanic, 18.8% Black and 14.6% Asian, Pacific Islanders, Alaskan Natives and Native Americans students. The proportions of English language learners, at 8%, and of special education students, at almost 10%, are below similar and City school averages. Altogether 10 languages are spoken in school. Alongside general education classes, there are collaborative team teaching classes and self-contained classes for special education students and for the gifted and talented. Students in gifted classes are selected through a district wide screening process.

For the past several years, student attendance, at 93%, has been consistently above the average of both similar and City middle schools.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal is a highly effective instructional leader, providing consistent and strategic support for students, parents and staff.
- Staff convey high expectations for all students and for themselves as teachers.
- The principal's full commitment to the students underpins the stimulating learning environment in the school, which provides a good range of opportunities for them to learn and show success.
- This highly collegial staff regularly share best practices, support each other well and believe that their work is meaningful and effective.
- The good organization and analysis of data by the staff results in effectively targeted instruction that enhances student learning.
- A coherent data-driven plan is in place for students needing support.
- Classroom management is uniformly excellent and all staff work together to ensure a calm, focused and safe learning community.
- Common elements unite the visually stimulating classrooms which are all print rich, well organized and highly conducive to learning.
- The principal and staff are proactive in viewing the whole child when supporting students at risk and employ positive academic and behavioral interventions.
- The thematic integrated curriculum engages students and effectively builds concept development.

### What the school needs to improve

- Continue to define fields of data that will inform constituents about student learning, particularly special education students, and to define steps to address differentiation.
- Use the mathematics resource room and professional development structure as a model to strengthen resources for all other content areas.
- Implement the plan to more effectively inform parents about curriculum, instruction and available data so that they can more actively support their children's progress.
- Research and implement programs to address needs of students not progressing as expected.
- Look at ways to offer enrichment activities to more students.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a well-developed school.**

The school is a safe and nurturing place where students work together with their teachers in small learning communities, carefully organized so that students and staff get to know each other well. The school conveys high expectations for all students and provides effective academic, social and emotional support to enable them to make good progress. There is a strong sense of collegiality among staff, evident in the consistent practice and displays seen in every classroom. All staff who work on and across grades constantly analyze data to determine trends, define areas of need and to make decisions about teaching and learning. Parents are enthusiastic about the quality of teaching in the school and give good support when they are able to do so.

### 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 principal is a highly effective instructional leader who focuses on student achievement and marshals all resources to that end. He has the personal expertise and skills to access and analyze available data and to help his staff and parents do the same. As a result, he develops his own data tailored to answering questions about the needs of the whole school, for each grade and student. The school looks closely at analyzed data for all groupings including ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students and those who struggle to reach grade standards. Consequently it has an accurate understanding of each student's knowledge and understanding and so implements successful intervention strategies to meet individual students' needs. As a result of last year's analysis, the school implemented effective strategies to enable English language learners to meet challenging targets.

The school compares the progress of students to that in similar middle schools, to check for trends and to inform staff and parents about student performance. Data is systematically tracked and analyzed for each class, across grades and academies. Individual students' strengths and needs are continuously monitored through an analysis of specific skills and achievements in State assessments, the Princeton Review, the Grow Report and school-developed tests. In addition, teachers and administrators use student portfolios and a range of the school's own assessments to build a secure picture of student performance and progress.

The principal and his instructional team are aware that they must continue to define and analyze fields of data for special education students who narrowly missed meeting the school's progress target in mathematics last year.

#### **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.**

Staff work together in and across academies to translate information gained from data analysis into strategic instructional goals and interventions for each subject and for groups of students. For example, during a grade 8 meeting, teachers and the mathematics coach analyzed students' answers in the most recent interim assessments. The outcome was a list of correct and incorrect answers and associated skills and concepts that students needed to develop and learn.

Teachers use an extensive portfolio system which gives students clear expectations of the quality of work expected at each grade. For each subject, a portfolio cover sheet outlines goals for the required collection of work. These are carefully aligned with expected standards and reflect areas tested on formal assessments. The staff have also created portfolios for English language learners incorporating verbal, written and performance goals. Additional work included in the document aligns well with the Language Assessment Battery for English proficiency.

There is a coherent and sequential data-driven plan in place for students in need of academic intervention services. As children are identified, teachers and support staff use a highly structured framework called *Plan for Success*. This incorporates mandated measures and includes additional information suggested by staff to build a more complete profile of each child. As a result, all staff have access to portfolios of students' histories and a clear organizational tool for the ongoing collection of data and information. This system is used effectively to inform planning and instruction. The principal and staff are proactive in viewing the whole child when supporting students at risk and employ positive academic and behavioral interventions. The school is eager to strengthen its tracking of and support for those students who are not progressing as well as expected.

Parents are aware of the high expectations of the school and have many opportunities to attend workshops that help them to support their children's learning. These are not well attended by some parents who live a distance from the school. There is an appropriate plan to secure more active engagement of these parents in their children's education. Students themselves are well aware of what is expected of them and are eager to achieve their goals.

**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 has a well-structured curriculum which ensures all subjects offered are taught in interesting ways. Common curriculum strands in mathematics, science, technology, government, economics and the arts are integrated carefully into grade-level studies. These common strands spiral vertically, offering good opportunities for the review of key concepts as studies deepen and become more challenging each year. Teachers work closely in grade-level teams to map the curriculum and develop pacing calendars which align with State and City standards. To support the curriculum, coaches and teachers have developed daily reading, writing and mathematics lessons and accompanying assessments for each grade.

Classroom management is uniformly excellent as a result of several strategic steps. For example, 6th and 7th graders work in grade level houses and, for the most part, remain in their classrooms. This reduces movement around the school, resulting in a calm, safe atmosphere which is appreciated by students, staff and parents. Students are fully engaged in learning because lessons are mostly interesting and aligned well to different needs within each class.

Staff are held accountable for improving instruction and work hard to refine teaching, particularly differentiation, so that student needs can be best addressed. The Wilson Remedial Reading Program provides good support for targeted students. Those due to graduate soon from the program expressed confidence about participating in regular classroom activities. To challenge academically advanced students, the school offers a good range of enrichment activities in fine and performing arts, digital photography and a student-generated school newspaper. However, these project-based learning activities are not offered to average and struggling students.

Budgeting decisions effectively reflect needs identified in data. For instance, to tackle weaknesses in mathematics the school has developed a resource room, well stocked with manipulatives to support teachers in diversifying their instruction of the subject. Impact has been positive. There is a drive to improve resources in other curriculum areas as a result. Teachers are carefully assigned to maximize student learning and scheduling is similarly very carefully aligned to student needs.

Students value the support provided and the respect shown to them by staff. They feel very comfortable about approaching adults with any concerns that they might have. Attendance is monitored rigorously and all absences chased up immediately. As a result, attendance has been steadily improving each year.

**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 well respected by the school community and his actions to date reflect his strong capacity to effect further change. Staff turnover is low. When positions become available, the principal hires strategically, actively recruiting teachers who have high expectations for students, who consider themselves life-long learners and who are able to use data to inform planning and instruction. The newly-appointed assistant principal, for example, has particular expertise in methodologies for the gifted and Teachers' College programs, both areas identified as in need of development within the school.

The principal is instrumental in leading his staff in the analysis of data to determine not only the knowledge, skills and abilities mastered by students but also to identify areas which require more attention. He provides ongoing targeted professional development so that all teachers can learn to unlock and analyze data. The instructional team also provides well-focused support for staff on differentiated instruction including tailored small group instruction, peer tutoring and one-on-one tutoring. Team meetings provide additional opportunities for staff to evaluate their work and share ideas. Practice has improved as a result of these activities but the school is determined to further improve differentiation through more sophisticated analysis of data.

The principal and staff conduct monthly walkthroughs to focus on targeted areas, arising from data analysis. As a result, instructional practice and the organization of classrooms are consistent across the school. For instance, all rooms are print-rich with designated display areas for mathematics and literacy charts, student portfolios and labeled classroom libraries. With this approach, the school provides a coherent learning experience for students, which is effectively underpinned by the regular and reassuring routines in this well-organized institution.

Partnerships with community groups and other organizations such as the Brighton Neighborhood Association, the New York Aquarium and the Staten Island and Brooklyn Historical Societies, effectively support the school's work and help it to reach its goals. Outside agency staff also provide well-focused interventions for students who need extra help to learn.

**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.**

The principal and staff are all strongly focused on meeting the school's goals, which are well articulated in the Comprehensive Education Plan. Regular monitoring and evaluation activities to review the school's work and performance are well targeted towards this end. The principal meets several times a week with the instructional team, for example, to confer and focus on curriculum and instruction as they relate to long- and short-term goals. This process is well informed by teacher feedback based on conference notes, student writing and classroom assessments. Goals in the Comprehensive Educational Plan are used regularly to measure the impact of instructional programs on progress and are revised during the year if necessary. The school is actively involved in an ongoing cyclical process of implementation, assessment, fine tuning and revision.

All staff are committed to and actively involved in improving teaching and learning. Regular meetings focus on analyzing progress, assessing goals and revising plans for instruction where the need arises. This process takes place systematically at class, subject and student level. The pupil personnel committee reflects this approach through its regular evaluation of the progress of students at risk resulting in revisions to instruction and curriculum, where appropriate. Goals are amended as student gains are made and new goals are set. In its endeavors to maximize achievement, the school is continually reflecting on practice and actively taking steps to secure further improvement.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: The Herbert S. Eisenberg School (IS 303)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>			<b>X</b>

<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>			<b>X</b>
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>		<b>X</b>	
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>			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>

\* 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.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			<b>X</b>
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.		<b>X</b>	
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.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>

<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