



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Science, Technology and Research Early College  
High School at Erasmus**

**High School 543**

**911 Flatbush Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 1126**

**Principal: Henrietta Coursey**

**Dates of review: May 9 – 10, 2007**

**Reviewer: John Hudson**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Science, Technology and Research Early College High School provides education for about 420 students of whom over 80% are Black and 10% are Hispanic. Small numbers of Asian/Pacific and White students complete the enrollment.

The proportion of students who are English language learners is 2%. The proportion of special education students is less than 1%. The main language spoken is English. At 62%, the proportion of students with Title 1 eligibility is above the average for City schools and well above similar schools. Attendance, at 94%, is higher than similar and City schools.

The school opened with grade 9 students in 2003 as one of 75 schools in the national early college initiative. Grade 6 students were enrolled for the first time in 2006. The school celebrates its first graduation year in 2007.

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 school uses State and City test outcomes and a broad range of its own assessment data very effectively to provide an objective and regularly updated understanding of student performance.
- Collaborative teams make good use of data to compare progress among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, gender groups, special education students and English language learners.
- Teams carefully set demanding and objectively measurable short-term and long-term goals with plans and timeframes to raise student achievement.
- Collaborative teams select and fine tune the curriculum and resources with great precision to meet demanding goals.
- The school manages its budget with great care to improve student learning and raise achievement.
- The school is a calm, safe learning environment where students are well cared for and respected.
- Attendance and punctuality are priorities and very good attendance is achieved and celebrated.
- The principal, who has led the strong growth and development of the school from the start, commands the respect of students, staff and parents.
- Careful, regular tracking and continuous evaluation of performance enables the school to revise and improve its processes over successive phases of school planning.

### What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that the very highest expectations for student progress and achievement, so clearly apparent in much of the school, are shared among all students and parents.
- Improve differentiation and instruction to the best practice seen in the school so that all students are effectively challenged and engaged to achieve their full potential.
- Extend professional learning through more self-evaluation, peer-evaluation and sharing of best practice so that all teachers have the skills needed to continuously raise student expectations and improve their performance.
- Continue to introduce an improved periodic assessment tool.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

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

The principal and her staff make very good use of regularly updated data to gain a growing understanding of student achievement. The school is particularly effective at tracking the progress of different groups of students. These include students moving towards college entry, students joining the school at grades 6 and 9, special education students, English language learners and students in greatest need of improvement. The impact of the school's periodic assessment material is satisfactory in the middle school section. In the high school, where detailed analysis by subject area is essential, it is less effective. Collaborative teacher teams support each other to identify students' next learning steps. They set demanding goals to improve teaching and student performance in order to raise student expectations of high academic achievement.

The school is characterized by a culture of care for the individual. Mutual respect between and among teachers and learners fosters very good relationships. Levels of attendance and punctuality are high. Students are courteous and behavior is good. Teachers know their students well. The school is well ordered and procedures are clear and followed by all.

### 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.**

In order to gain a deep understanding of student learning the school collects a broad range of data, including State and City test outcomes and its own frequently measured achievement and other data, including attendance records. The principal, her assistant principal and faculty carefully analyze data in order to monitor the performance and progress of individual students. The data is effectively used to compare the achievement and progress of different classrooms, grade levels, subject areas, ethnic groups and gender groups. The progress of English language learners and special education students is tracked with particular care, as is the progress of those students who may be of particular interest to the school. These include all students in higher grades as they move towards college entry, and students in grades 6 and 9 who are in their first year at the school. The school finds its current periodic assessment tool more suited to middle school than high school needs and is evaluating alternative arrangements for the next school year.

The relative performance of boys and girls is compared within classrooms and across different subject areas. Through the use of these comparisons the school identified a group of boys who are under achieving. The principal compares the school's performance with other schools in the early college program.

**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 school’s use of data is becoming increasingly sophisticated as it seeks to identify those specific learning needs which may limit student progress at any time. Senior staff, subject, grade and other teams use data to gain a good understanding of students’ next learning steps. Collaborative teams use this knowledge to set challenging, objectively measurable, intermediate and long-range goals and plans for achieving them. Student progress is continuously tracked and causes of under achievement are identified. For example, comparisons of classrooms across a grade level gives information about the relative performance of teachers in one subject area. Comparisons of one classroom’s performance across different subject areas are used to identify strengths and weaknesses in respective subject curriculum plans. Detailed knowledge of the relative performance of groups of special interest to the school, including special education and English language learners, enables the school to set interim and longer-term goals with detailed plans and timeframes for achieving them.

Expectations are inconsistent across the school. While one group of parents thinks the school sets high expectations, another group expresses the view that although some members of the school community hold high expectations of student achievement, others do not. The school is aware of this issue and continues to seek ways to achieve consistently high expectations right across the school and involve all parents in their children’s education. Although school goals and plans to improve student performance drive the activity of much of the school community, not quite all are involved.

**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 proficient.**

The school enables students to achieve as highly as possible in State and City exams and to make very best use of its early college program. This is a high priority. Staff work collaboratively to align the mandated curriculum and enable students to progress as quickly as possible. Student performance is tracked through regular interim assessments towards longer term goals in order to ensure that students achieve highly. Teachers are accountable to the principal for differentiating their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data. They fine tune plans to enable students to progress very well. The quality of instruction is inconsistent. There are very good examples of well paced, interesting lessons where instruction, plans and resources are matched to the achievements of individual learners. Some instruction is less well developed and the needs of some students are not identified and addressed with sufficient speed. In consequence, not all learners are fully engaged and their continued progress is put at risk.

The school makes very good use of the resources available to it. The enrollment has been growing each year since 2003 and will continue to do so until 2008 when the school will be complete with all grade levels from 6 to 12. Over this period the number of teaching and support staff has continued to increase and other costs have risen. Nevertheless, class

sizes have been kept relatively low to support learning and raise achievement. Effective use of staff ensures that students in need of improvement are very well supported.

Students feel cared for and respected. Their behavior is good and the climate in the school is calm, quiet and learning focused. Students are confident that if they have an issue of concern to them, there are many members of staff they could confide in. There is a very strong emphasis on good attendance and punctuality. The achievement of those students whose attendance is very good is celebrated. At 94%, attendance is higher than city schools generally and similar schools in particular.

**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.**

As the school continues to grow the principal is looking for staff who want to work with children in an urban environment and are happy to work in a small early college. Teachers must be determined to continue learning, with particular reference to aligning their instruction to student needs. The principal has very high expectations for herself, her staff and her students. She is well aware that effective use of data to identify learning trends, and the skills needed to align curriculum and instruction to individual student strengths and weaknesses, require carefully targeted professional development. This process will continue to be a priority as significant numbers of new staff are brought into the growing school.

Teachers frequently discuss how to improve learning and raise achievement. In addition to more conventional approaches to professional development, the school uses alternative methods to share best practice. For example, good use of interactive smart boards has been effectively shared among teachers. Extending activities like this will improve professional learning. The school is considering how to increase inter-classroom visitations, self and peer-evaluation. The principal and assistant principal regularly observe classroom teaching to identify best practice and instructional styles which are not aligned to the needs of all students within a classroom.

Collaborative teams work very effectively. They use data to evaluate the impact of plans and goals on student performance and revise them as needed. The improving achievement team, for example, identifies individual students whose performance is declining. The team formulates plans to raise achievement and tracks progress towards demanding goals. The principal is respected by students, staff and parents. She has demonstrated her ability to effect continuous change and improvement over the first four years of the school's life. The school is a highly ordered learning environment. Through its early college and network partnerships, the school actively and effectively strives for the highest achievable outcomes for all its students.

**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 school measures student performance at regular intervals throughout the year. Data are recorded and used very effectively to track achievement against interim goals. Collaborative teams compare outcomes within and across classrooms and grade levels to determine how effectively students are making progress. Plans are revised accordingly. Analysis of weekly tests and other assessment measures is used to track the progress of individual students and groups of students between interim assessment dates. Curriculum and instructional plans are amended immediately as appropriate. Comparisons across schools are made annually and the school is determined to raise achievement to the highest level.

Each spring and summer, the school carefully reviews its performance in meeting the goals it set the previous summer. The school leadership team sets broad goals for the succeeding year. Subject and grade teams work effectively together to set interim and longer-term goals with plans to enable the school to achieve its goals. Precise goals are set for students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subjects and groups of interest to the school. The school takes great care to set goals and plans to challenge those groups of students in greatest need of improvement, including special education students, English language learners, students approaching State or City tests, especially those approaching college entry, and others in need of improvement. In this way successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning continuously raise expectations and increase student achievement.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: STAR Early College High at Erasmus HS 543</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