



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Cambria Heights School**

**Public School 176**

**120-45 235th Street  
Queens  
NY 11411**

**Principal: Arlene Bartlett**

**Dates of review: November 30 - December 4, 2006**

**Reviewer: Sylvia Gatehouse**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Cambria Heights is an elementary school for 600 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5 with about 8% special education students. Fewer than 2% of the students are designated English language learners. Very nearly all the students are from Black families. There is a very small number of students from Hispanic, White or Asian families. Attendance rates are higher than those of similar and City schools, with 94.4% in 2005. The percentage of students who are Title I eligible is well above that for similar or City schools.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal provides outstanding leadership and excellent management, and is held in very high esteem.
- The assistant principal has an excellent working partnership with the principal.
- Students' performance in annual tests is improving consistently over time.
- The school interprets performance data effectively and adjusts the curriculum accordingly to align with students' needs.
- The spirit of teamwork among all staff generates a strong sense of purpose.
- Students' behavior and attitudes to learning are excellent.
- The school provides an exciting curriculum that is broadly based and well balanced across a range of subjects.
- The overall quality of teaching is very high throughout the school, underpinned by very good professional development and monitoring programs.
- The Comprehensive Education Plan and other documents are used very well to focus what the school needs to do and how its aims are to be achieved.
- Students needing support with their learning, and those identified as gifted and talented, are given every chance to succeed.

### What the school needs to improve

- Improve resources for technology as a tool for teaching and learning.
- Establish specific professional development to increase staff confidence and expertise in technology.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

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

Cambria Heights provides its students with an excellent foundation for the rest of their education. It has a remarkably warm, welcoming culture in which everyone is highly valued. The principal provides very strong direction with excellent management skills. Staff like working there and students are eager to learn. Attendance levels are very high and nearly everyone arrives punctually. The school is uncompromising in its quest for excellence, but does not pursue students' academic prowess at the cost of their personal development. Students enjoy a broad and balanced curriculum, enriched by a range of exciting clubs. Staff pride themselves on the high quality of their teamwork. The school is bright with student's work and vibrant with their music-making.

The staff are acutely conscious of the school's aims. They work tirelessly to achieve them through constant reappraisal of performance data in order to align their teaching as efficiently as possible. They enliven their classes so students' attitudes to learning are remarkably positive: students try their hardest and concentrate well, persevering when the challenge is high. Students are aware of the rubrics they are working towards and are becoming adept at accurate self-evaluation. There is a strong sense of purpose in the school, and a positive and supportive culture. Consequently, students show consistent progress, gaining in self-confidence and self-esteem as they build on their successes.

### 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 consistently accumulates much worthwhile objective data, recording students' performance in English and mathematics, and this is frequently scrutinized during the school year to monitor students' progress over time. The school uses all available data from State and City test results. There is also clear evidence that the school has established comprehensive systems, both formal and informal, of its own making. For example, the school's systems include teachers' daily grading of work, regular conferencing times, and frequent monitoring by the school leadership team. The school therefore has a constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, each ethnic group, English language learners, special education students and other categories of interest. The principal and the assistant principal have a very clear understanding of this data. They use it very efficiently to monitor students' progress against agreed rubrics, through regular visits to class, and from scrutinizing work.

Comparisons with similar schools and with the school's own past performance are rigorously conducted. The progress of all students, classes, grade levels and academic subject areas is similarly scrutinized. The resultant impact of these activities is evident in the steady upward trends in the school's performance overall. This is a strength of the

school and lies at the heart of its determination to help each student do as well as possible.

**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.**

The school makes very good use of data in setting individual goals for students, such as the present challenge for each student to read a set number of books in a given time. Medium- and long-term goals are agreed by teachers who meet each week at grade-level conferences attended by school leaders. There are excellent monitoring strategies to check students’ progress as they move towards achieving those goals. These keep students’ progress in clear focus day by day.

Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole, as well as on each student, grade and subject. All the staff are very skilled in the analysis and interpretation of students’ performance data. They use it all extremely well to plan their instruction, working together collaboratively in teams, consulting the specialists in English, mathematics, and reading as needed. They also seek the advice of the teachers for those students who are designated as requiring special help or who are identified as being gifted and talented. In these ways, the needs of students are closely aligned through finely-tuned planning.

The quality of intervention for special education students is outstanding. For instance, frequent well-organized meetings are held by a team of teachers and other professionals, including social workers and educational psychologists, to evaluate each student’s development in detail. In these meetings, decisions are agreed about next steps and action to be taken to secure further improvement, including communicating with parents. This is a highly successful part of the school’s work.

Parents and students are well aware of the targets that are being set in the short term because teachers share their decisions with them at regular conferences, so everyone is working together towards the same 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 fully implements the mandated curriculum, but has expanded it so that it is interesting and exciting. Work on display around the school in many subject areas is testimony to the successful and innovative way the curriculum is organized. For instance, students make excellent use of their mathematical knowledge of symmetry and angles in detailed models of public buildings in New York. Cross-curricular linking is a strength that brings learning to life in vivid and exciting ways.

The curriculum is differentiated to meet individual needs, in the light of accurate analysis of performance data. Everyone is aware of the school’s current goals, embedded in the focused Comprehensive Education Plan, to raise reading and writing standards to even

higher levels. Working in teams, staff frequently evaluate and plan the curriculum according to students' performance as revealed in the data. In class, this care and attention to detail enables students, on an individual basis, to work towards achieving higher standards by building on their past achievement. This is another strength in the way the school organizes its curriculum.

The school aims to give students rich experiences in literacy, the arts, and social sciences. Evidence of success is clearly seen, for instance, in their creative writing, and in their lively accounts of visits to the federal courts. The quality of music in the school is outstanding. Parents speak highly of the citizenship element in the curriculum and of the ways the school fosters students' personal development. These opportunities bring relevance and meaning to the curriculum.

The school's budget is managed efficiently and the school is generally well resourced. For example, special education students are given support in a carefully planned program providing their full entitlement to the entire curriculum. Although the school lacks resources for technology such as interactive electronic whiteboards, teachers make very good use of what is available, such as overhead projectors. Staff are deployed according to the needs revealed by scrutiny of the students' performance data.

There is mutual respect between staff and students, who know who to turn to if troubled. Parents confirm that any concerns are taken up promptly and dealt with effectively. Among other strategies, staff spend time in one-to-one conferencing with students to help overcome any problems. There are successful procedures to monitor the very good attendance and punctuality. The level of care lavished on students is a strength of the school: staff know the students well and share information with each other providing mutual support and advice. The cumulative outcome is that students' behavior is excellent, and they have very positive attitudes to learning.

**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.**

In the four years since her appointment, the principal has built a stable staff, selected for their high expectations and proven record in the classroom, who are empowered under her imaginative leadership and excellent management. She is very highly respected by staff, students and parents, most notably for her qualities of consistency, fairness and efficiency. Parents are copious in their praise of her management of change, making the school a well-ordered community where students' behavior is excellent. The close partnership between the principal and the assistant principal is recognized by all staff as a strength of the school and serves as a powerful role model for everyone else. Students wear their uniform with pride, and enjoy other innovations that the principal has introduced, such as 'Fabulous Fridays'. The school's exemplary community spirit is nowhere better demonstrated than in the outstanding quality of the students' singing: the chorus sings with whole-hearted commitment.

Members of the administration maintain high profiles around the school during the day. Consequently, the school runs smoothly, with a calm, well-ordered atmosphere, enhanced by exemplary communication: for example, the principal provides a message board with a thought for the day as well as organizational matters of importance. Good use is made of support services for students facing barriers to learning, and there are well-developed

partnerships with community-based organizations, some of whom play an active role in the life of the school.

The principal is a frequent visitor to classes, as are other members of the administration. There is a shared determination to maintain the high quality of teachers' instructional skills. Teachers frequently support each other, with the aid of intervention services when necessary, in the common aim of improving each student's performance.

In this school, reflection and self-evaluation are integral parts of its fabric. Staff and students are committed to doing their best. Staff frequently review how successful their planning has been in reaching their stated goals and plan the next steps together, in teams, ensuring equality between classes and consistency across grades. Professional development opportunities are especially well managed. There is a range of ways in which staff needs are identified and addressed to improve their instruction. However, there are no opportunities for staff to develop their skills in the fluent use of new technology resources such as interactive whiteboards.

**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**

Throughout the year, the school makes excellent use of a wide range of built-in structures that evaluate students' progress. For instance, teachers' grading of work, together with regular and frequent scrutiny of every student's books by the administration, ensures prompt revision of plans. These strategies guarantee that the school remains firmly on course to reach its stated goals for accelerated learning.

One of the school's greatest strengths lies in the flexible realignment of the curriculum and instruction in response to the identified needs of individuals and groups of students, revealed in the performance data that teachers acquire and analyze. Wide-ranging assessment strategies, together with comparisons of progress within and across grades, are frequently monitored and revised by the principal and the leadership team, teams of staff, social workers and psychologists. A particular strength of this school is that students themselves are developing extremely effective self-evaluation skills through reference to rubrics and other devices. For example, students make very good use of 'remote controls' of the school's own design, to assess their own performance. They find these devices very motivating since they are part of everyday life and fun to use.

The school's Comprehensive Education Plan is constructed collaboratively and is a working document, directing the course of the school. The plan successfully drives successive phases of goal-setting. Progress towards achieving its stated aims is regularly checked during the year, and staff are proud to report that all targets are successfully achieved, leaving no work to be carried over from year to year. This is another strength of the school and reflects the very efficient management of the principal and other staff in their determined search for improvement.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Cambria Heights School (PS 176)</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>

<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