



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Donald Hertz School

Public / Middle School 83

**950 Rhineland Avenue
Bronx
NY 10462**

Principal: Benjamin P. Soccodato

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Reviewer: Clive Parsons

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Donald Hertz School, Public/Middle School 83, serves over 1600 students in kindergarten through grade 8. The school occupies two buildings on the same site, with grades kindergarten to 4 in the newer one and grades 5 to 8 in the older. Classes in the same grade are kept close together, each occupying a floor in the relevant block. Deans and assistant principals are located near to students in their specified grade. Teachers are more experienced than in other schools across the City and they take significantly fewer days' absence.

Student enrollment increases at grade 6 as students move in from other elementary schools. Approximately one half of students are Hispanic, one quarter are White and an eighth are Black. The remaining students are from a variety of other backgrounds. The school has fewer students recently arrived in the country than other schools, with a significant proportion of new students from Albania. There is a higher proportion of special education students (14%) than in other schools, but relatively fewer English language learners (10%). The student population is slightly more stable than in other schools and their attendance is broadly average. The school receives Title 1 funding and is placed in the low needs group for comparisons with other schools.

The school is popular and exceeds its official capacity as parents want to register their children at the school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Much of the teaching is well developed, often using educational technology effectively, and this is enabling good student learning and progress.
- The school is very well managed and leadership roles are effectively dispersed so that all members of its community take responsibility for their work.
- The principal's continuing drive for excellence ensures that expectations of student progress and personal development are very high.
- Data is used well to identify and monitor those students who require additional support and services.
- Students are presented with a wide breadth of learning opportunities and enrichment activities, which they welcome and enjoy.
- Effective work with a range of partners is contributing to the continued progress of students and of the school.
- Teachers value the way that they are empowered to develop new ideas and the way that they are then given the tools to do so.
- The school has a very good knowledge of both the academic and personal development of individual students, which it uses well to maximize their progress.
- The principal is well respected, highly visible and continually evaluating the school's effectiveness.
- Effective collaborative work is contributing to a very high level of collegiality, as well as candid self-evaluation.

What the school needs to improve

- Further develop computerized data systems to enable even more effective use of the information collected.
- Utilize fully the developing science laboratory and develop Regents preparation in mathematics and science.
- Expand the Saturday program to ensure that the specific needs of tested grades are addressed fully.
- Sustain the growing use of educational technology to support learning.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well developed school.

Public/Middle School 83 is a well managed and well organized school. It is resource-rich and the working environment feels respected and well cared for. The school is fully utilized to support learning. The increasing focus on the classroom and students' learning over the past few years is resulting in improving student performance, especially in the earlier grades. A broad range of learning experiences is provided, including in science and computer laboratories, as well as through music and art. Educational technology, such as smart boards, is also being used to good effect.

The principal is very solution-focused. There is a 'get the job done' attitude within the school and problems are solved in simple, cost-effective ways. Leadership is dispersed well, so that staff and students take increasing responsibility for their own development. Teachers feel empowered to suggest developments or improvements and well supported when they put them into action. They are expected to do a good job and are provided with the tools to enable them to do so. Effective partnerships with external organizations support the school's growth very well. Additional revenues help to enhance the building and resources, for example, and work with consultants effectively supports the development of the literacy program.

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 supplements the data available from City and State tests with a wide variety of other data so that there is a secure understanding of the performance and progress of students. Systems are in place to ensure that data is reviewed and evaluated for classes and grades, as well as for identified groups within the cohort including English language learners and special education students. Students close to level boundaries are a particular focus for the school. Opportunities are taken wherever possible to use comparisons to evaluate performance, with other schools and between classes, for example.

Student portfolios present an on-going picture of progress and provide an important overview for teachers at the next grade. Collaborative work between teachers helps to ensure that assessments are consistent and reliable. An academic intervention services weekly update form is being introduced. This will capture mathematics and English language arts trends across a grade, as well as any key information from science or social studies. Systems are supplemented by constant informal monitoring, which provides a continual update of where things are working well and where things might require some attention.

Various parts of the school's data system, such as the tracking of students who receive academic intervention, are computerized. This makes the task of providing a continually

updated picture of student performance more manageable. Other parts are becoming computerized, with the literacy team looking to capture recent work on reading records for example. Developing data systems in this way has the potential to enable an easier exploration of possible connections, causes and patterns. Care is needed, however, to ensure compatibility with future City-wide developments.

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.

Goals have been established to continue to increase the progress made by students. The school knows the required performance across each grade that is necessary to achieve these goals. Plans are being put in place to direct resources in a targeted way to ensure that goals are met. The school has recognized the importance of utilizing fully the resources available, such as a Saturday program, and that the plans should contain timeframes to evaluate their impact at stages through the year.

Goals are also developed in response to evaluation of diagnostic and interim tests as well as from the school’s monitoring systems. These are targeted at individual students, groups of students or a whole grade as appropriate. Teachers are also developing immediate classroom goals based on evaluation during a lesson. Data is used effectively to identify and monitor those students who require additional support and services to meet the expected standard, as well as those who require additional effort to maintain them at that level. Child study team meetings provide an effective mechanism for teachers to raise concerns about individual students and to discuss possible strategies for overcoming them or for targeting further intervention services. Students are directed to the lunch and after school clubs, as well as the 37½ minute sessions, whichever will have most impact for them.

Expectations of student progress and personal development are very high. This stems from the principal’s drive for excellence and determination to do the best for every child, which is supported and enacted by all staff. Parents are kept informed of their children’s progress and contacted should concerns arise. The school’s quick response to parents and solution-focused approach is appreciated by them. Parents feel welcome and able to approach the school. They also appreciate the sessions and workshops aimed at enabling them to understand the school’s expectations and procedures. This is helping them to support their children’s education more effectively.

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 is concerned with the broad-based development of students. Consequently, they are presented with a good breadth of classes. This includes computer and science laboratory classes, music and art work, as well as gym. Students appreciate the variety of enrichment activities made available to them. The principal recognizes the potential to build on the increasing capacity of the school in mathematics and science to develop

Regents programs in these areas. This would also provide additional extension and enrichment for students working at higher levels.

Teachers feel themselves accountable to students for the quality of their instruction. Much teaching is well developed. Data is used effectively to target support and challenge, to group students appropriately and to eliminate any weaknesses that are identified. Learning intentions are clear and activities engage students well. There is much effective use of technology, such as smart boards and data projectors. These encourage student engagement and the use of higher-order thinking skills, as well as supporting differentiated instruction. Nevertheless, there remains enormous potential to extend this work further to make an even greater impact on learning.

Staff have a very good knowledge of individual students, both their academic and personal development, which is used well to maximize their progress. Students confirm that they have someone on the staff to whom they can turn. Staff and student relationships are characterized by mutual respect. Attendance is a high priority and is monitored closely.

Budgeting decisions are targeted at implementing the school's plans and at maximizing student progress. For example, to ensure that students' goals for the year are achieved the principal decided to fund a Saturday school when central funding was not made available. Much staff time is put into supporting collaborative activity and professional development to improve instruction. The value of this is evident in the increasing proportion of highly effective lessons and the school's improving results. Teachers value the way that they are empowered to develop new ideas and the way that they are then given the tools to do so.

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 knows his staff well. He is highly visible, well respected, and continually monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the school through a balance of formal and informal strategies. He is careful to place teachers where he judges they will have most impact. Some very effective partnerships are developing in collaborative teaching classes, for example. He is also careful to select staff who fit best into the school's culture and who will be able to deliver his expectations.

Professional development is given a very high priority and is focused effectively on improving student outcomes. There is a very strong support network for staff. Teachers make good use of collaborative planning time, for example by using data to identify strengths and weaknesses from programs and to consider the implications for their instruction. They welcome the opportunity to work with other professionals including coaches and external consultants. Effective collaborative work contributes to a very high level of collegiality and candid self-evaluation. This in turn contributes to improving instruction and standards for students.

The school is very well managed, organized and focused on student learning. All members of the community take responsibility for their own work and are accountable for the quality of it. Leadership is being dispersed effectively and the capacity of the school to continue its growth is very good as a result. Effective work with many partners is contributing to the continued progress of the school. Examples include developing the

physical environment with a new middle school library, working with the police on education programs and developing the literacy program with external consultants.

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 is continually looking to evaluate its effectiveness and to modify plans if necessary to achieve its stated goals. A range of meetings and committees has been established to monitor and evaluate the school's overall progress, as well as that of individual and groups of students. In addition to formal observations and learning walks, daily classroom visits by the administration keep a finger on the pulse of the school. This enables timely identification of hotspots or issues, as well as evaluation of the progress of planned developments.

Evaluation of intervention programs, test scores and teachers' assessments leads to new approaches and curriculum modifications. Questions such as 'so what is the next step?' and 'what are the implications for our instruction?' are increasingly common. Evaluations are generally sufficiently timely to enable modifications to be made before time and energy have been used to insufficient effect. As a result, the school is sufficiently flexible to enact any necessary changes quickly.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Donald Hertz School (PS/MS 83)	∅	✓	+
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 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
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