



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Hermann Ridder School

Intermediate School 098

**1619 Boston Road
Bronx
NY 10460**

Principal: Claralee Irobunda

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Reviewer: Graham Preston

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Hermann Ridder School is a recently restructured intermediate school that now provides for 481 students in grades 6 through 8. Nearly two thirds of students have Hispanic backgrounds with Black students making up most of the remaining third. Well over 90% of students are Title 1 eligible. There are currently 122 special education students (25%) and 85 English language learners, almost 18%. The school has a greater than average proportion of students newly arrived in the country and greater than average numbers of students joining and leaving the school. Attendance rates are also similar to comparable schools, and just below the City average.

Under new leadership the school is now organized into three academies that provide different curriculum pathways that enhance the required core subject requirements.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides exceptional leadership that has taken the school forward in a relatively short time.
- The formation of three academies has created small, cohesive teams of teachers and support staff that are able to share information about student progress.
- Students have responded positively to the new academies because of the greater opportunity to pursue interests in science, technology, visual arts and media studies.
- The new school environment has generated positive commitment from staff with evidence of more challenging, varied and innovative teaching.
- The school's responsiveness and increasing effectiveness have stimulated a greater interest and involvement of parents.
- Although the timescale is too short to see significant gains in achievement, there has been a marked improvement in student attitudes and behavior.
- Special education students and others in need benefit from the additional teaching and guidance made possible by the extended day, after school and Saturday tutoring and the homework support and counseling of the Children's Aid Society.
- Improved financial management has considerably improved furniture and resources around the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Accelerate the progress of gifted and talented students, as part of the school's drive to provide more challenging learning for all.
- Provide appropriate management training to support the greater empowerment of staff and increased delegation of responsibilities.
- Develop systems that enable staff to track the academic progress of individuals and classes over time, in order to better evaluate the restructured school's effectiveness.
- Increase efforts to broaden teachers' skills and improve differentiation of learning activities.
- Continue efforts to develop information technology across all three academies and train teachers in its use.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The principal provides exceptional leadership that has taken the school forward in a short space of time. Staff have been empowered by her management style and are very committed to the improvement of the school. They recognize that this is still 'work in progress' but the school has sufficiently sound procedures in place to be judged as proficient. The school is establishing better ways of evaluating its progress and meeting the needs of all students and there has been success in raising students' expectations, and engaging their interest.

The small and cohesive academies help staff share information and be more responsive to students' needs. The school makes effective use of support services including the valuable help of the Children's Aid Society. Better links with parents and the improving provision is increasing the popularity of the school.

These changes are too recent to have yet had an effect on the school's results in test and examination.

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 proficient.

The school makes appropriate use of the different state and other external data to interpret student performance. Teachers and school leaders also use other measures such as the Princeton Review tests in literacy and mathematics as well as reading and other assessments. The cabinet are able to use this data to understand how the school compares with other City schools and review student progress.

In-school assessments include simulated State assessments, project work and regular grading of work. This forms the basis of reviews carried out by the grade teams who regularly evaluate students' progress in their respective academies. All of this data is sufficient to identify individual progress or lack of it, as well as the progress of particular classes. Through this they are able to meet the needs of particular students and make use of support programs.

With a number of new staff there is a need to ensure they are able to make sense of all the data and this is being addressed through staff development. With the relative newness of the restructured school, teachers and school leaders are less able to evaluate students' progress over time and are still in the process of organizing information to provide a clear picture of the progress of individuals and cohorts over time.

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 with some well developed features.

The principal provides exceptional leadership and has a clear vision of where she wants to take the school. Much of the development planning is documented and there is a shared commitment and clarity of purpose that drives the activity of all key players including academy teams, students, parents and other partners. It is less clear, however, that the senior and other staff are yet developing clear goals and carefully structured improvement plans for their respective areas. This is understandable at this stage.

Most students are aware of their levels and because of increasingly good feedback from teachers on the quality of their work, know what they have to do to improve. Data is effectively used to direct special education students and others in need of additional support to the most appropriate supplementary programs. They benefit from the additional teaching and guidance made possible by the extended day, after-school and Saturday tutoring and the homework support and counseling of the Children’s Aid Society.

The progress that has been made in capturing the interest of parents and involving them in activities is increasingly evident. Attendance at parent/teacher conferences is much higher, and a more effective parents’ association is developing outside links and organizing workshops to help parents better support their children. The parents are active in the school leadership group. Students are very positive about the recent changes and play their part in the school through their student government.

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 with well developed features.

This is the strongest aspect of the school. A need to address concerns about student achievement, attitudes and behavior was identified, partly through the use of formal data and partly through observations throughout the school. This has been addressed by reorganizing the school into three academies that provide different curriculum pathways within the constraints of the prescribed instructional program. Some students follow the science and technology route where they have appreciated better access to information technology and robotics. Others are enjoying the visual arts and media option while the exploratory option is providing more active opportunities to develop personal and investigative skills. These programs have been largely successful in engaging and motivating students.

The school has also developed more robust strategies to improve attendance such as same day phoning and better communications to keep parents informed. These efforts together with the improvements in the curriculum are beginning to have a positive impact on attendance which is currently 91%.

The school has been able to support the above developments by investing considerably in new classroom furniture, books and learning resources, as well as computers and interactive whiteboards. This has been possible by effective financial management and

has considerably benefited teachers' efforts to improve their classroom practice. This is evident in good display work and classroom layout. However, while staff are more readily recognizing different student learning needs there is still some way to go in efforts to develop more active, student-centered learning with learning materials that provide varied challenge.

The smaller teams mean that teachers and support staff can more readily monitor student progress. This information is used to direct students to the very good after-school and Saturday morning teaching and tutoring sessions. The school is also able to draw upon the Children's Aid Society which provides considerable staffing for help with after-school homework as well as professional counseling and support. The one qualification in this otherwise well-developed program is that the focus on students making insufficient progress has been at the expense of better supporting and accelerating the learning of those students considered gifted and talented.

Another benefit of the academy system is that the students are now well known to a number of staff, and this builds trust and improves behavior. Students feel confidence in their teachers, are proud of their school and know that they can turn to teachers when they need help.

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 proficient.

The principal has used her considerable experience to bring about substantial change in the last year. She has provided good opportunities for senior staff to be actively involved in the strategic development of the school as well as take on significant leadership as head of an academy. Other staff take the opportunities now provided to share in the development of the school.

All staff recognize that there is a need for substantial staff development and there has been considerable investment of time and resources in that area. A major focus has been on improving classroom practice and the school has been making effective use of various providers including consultants for English, literacy and mathematics. Through staff development, the school is addressing the need for recently appointed teachers to use and apply the available data to their teaching. Additionally, because of the recent restructuring, all staff need time and support to see and assess the students' progress over time.

In addition to the considerable observations and guidance provided by the principal and assistant principals, the school has appointed lead teachers in English and established collaborative teacher development through a 'buddy' system and shared observations. Staff recognize this is still 'work in progress' and there is a need for further development in order to improve student outcomes.

The new school arrangements are gradually becoming established. The academy groups are proving effective though there is a recognition that cross-school groups also need to be maintained to support subject development. Overall though, the school is operating in a calm and purposeful manner. The partnership with the Children's Aid Society is particularly effective in providing support and guidance for 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 proficient with some undeveloped features.

The school is experiencing major reorganization and a range of new initiatives so the focus has been on implementation with monitoring and reflection coming later. The principal is very experienced but the assistant principals and others with responsibility are still developing in their roles. Elements of those roles involve monitoring and evaluating the overall school improvement although at this point there has been limited time and data to do this thoroughly.

However, the school does have the necessary features to monitor itself and respond flexibly. The Comprehensive Education Plan is reviewed at the beginning of the school year to identify the goals and percentages set, although there is no simplified version of the plan with interim goals to support the process of evaluation and amendment through the year. Despite this, the principal, members of the cabinet, faculty and school leadership team evaluate the school's progress toward its goals regularly. Change is conducted in an atmosphere of openness in which the principal and senior staff are accessible and responsive, and the wider staff are willing to adopt new ideas and approaches and work together to review practice and improve. This is evident in the academy teams where teachers are monitoring student achievement and exploring different ways of helping students make progress.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Hermann Ridder School (IS 098)	∅	✓	+
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	