



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Herbert S Eisenberg**

**Intermediate School 303**

**501 West Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11224**

**Principal: Gary R Ingrassia**

**Dates of review: November 1 - 2, 2007**

**Lead Reviewer: Denis Pittman**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Herbert S Eisenberg is an intermediate school with 785 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 18% Black, 25% Hispanic, 41% White and 16% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 91.8%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 64% eligibility.

The school shares the building with a small high school.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal runs a well-organized school and has clear, effectively-communicated expectations of students and staff.
- Data collection and management is very efficient and rigorous, enabling exemplary tracking of individual students' achievement and progress.
- Relationships between students and staff are particularly impressive reflecting the strong, supportive climate in the school.
- Parents are kept very well informed about their children's progress.
- The school offers a very good range of curriculum activities through its small learning communities and "talent" programs which support students' academic, creative and social well-being.
- Administrative and specialist support for students in greatest need of improvement is very effective.
- School routines are very systematic and well understood by students, promoting an orderly community which enhances student learning.
- Budgeting and staffing decisions have been very effectively and efficiently aligned with the school's improvement needs.
- Professional development opportunities are extensive and clearly aligned to the learning needs of both students and teachers.
- Teachers are skilful in providing engaging instruction to meet the needs of students.

### What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that interim targets are set for whole school goals so that monitoring is more effective.
- Ensure that teachers provide instruction which is continuously challenging for students placed in high achieving classes.
- Implement strategies to further develop teachers' skills, knowledge and understanding of the collection and utilization of data.
- Explore more ways of inviting and enabling parents to communicate their children's learning needs and interests.
- Improve the use of quantitative data in making comparisons with similar schools.

## Part 3: Main findings

### **Progress made since the last review**

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

### **Overall Evaluation**

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

The principal leads this effective and well-organized school from the front, and his leadership has provided the key catalyst for improvement and change in recent years. The school has made a determined response to the challenge of improving its overall performance and is effective in most key areas of development planning, apart from the setting and monitoring of interim objectives in relation to whole school goals. The administration and faculty have a good understanding of where the school is, how each student is performing and progressing and how it is going to make improvements. One area the school has identified for improvement is in providing more training for teachers on the management and analysis of student data. Parents are appreciative of the safe learning community that has been created. The school is actively encouraging greater parental involvement. Curriculum mapping, particularly in math and literacy is very effective, but there are a few adjustments still to be made in ensuring that activities in lessons are sufficiently challenging for a high achieving students. The school has the capacity to improve further and is very well placed to do so.

Since the last review the school has improved enrichment opportunities for students, improved the support for special education students and enhanced literacy resources. The inquiry team is in place and is at the stage of identifying a sample group of low achieving students to address strategies for improving their performance in English language arts.

### **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 the student's progress over time.**

#### **This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The principal has created a high quality data management system for collecting performance information and identifying the learning needs of students. A comprehensive analysis of student achievement is shared with all relevant members of the faculty. The benchmarking process provides a highly effective procedure for establishing initial learning steps for students. The data collection includes comparisons of the progress made by different classes within the grades, and between different grades. The school has used the data analysis of literacy skills to identify improvement goals in relation to reading levels. Recent performance data indicates strategies which have been introduced are having a positive impact. Not all faculty members are equally conversant about how to use the information to plan and improve their instruction. The administration has

recognized this and plans for all staff to receive training, particularly in relation to the new citywide assessment systems that are being set in place.

Class teachers keep a close check on the progress made by the individual students in their class through portfolio assessments. Staff have a very good understanding of the needs and capabilities of special education students and English language learners whose performance improves accordingly. The specialists' guidance in relation to diagnostic assessment is of particular benefit in helping the students make significant progress. The administration systematically uses its data files to check on the progress and performance of ethnic groups and to also make gender comparisons. The evidence of these investigations indicates that there are no significant statistical trends which the school feels it needs to address. The principal also keeps a close eye on past performance data to ensure that standards are maintained. However, the quantitative analysis of data in relation to similar schools is not so strong. In general, though, the school makes very effective use of its data in order to identify how to improve achievement even further.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The school makes effective use of the information it has collected in order to set learning steps for individual students, classes, grades and groups of students. Overarching goals, such as the development of a "model" classroom, systematic evaluation of student work and the creation of a standardized student portfolio are also set at the whole school level. Staff are skillful at quickly identifying and promoting the performance of those students who are experiencing the greatest difficulty in making progress. Specialist staff, such as a social worker and psychologist, work closely with teachers to carefully identify the nature of the problems that the students are having. These detailed discussions are regular and reflect the concern of the school in meeting the needs of all students.

Parents are pleased with the way the school treats them as partners in the education of their children. The parent coordinator actively seeks to improve this partnership through a range of workshop activities. Events have included orientation evenings for new students, advice on high school applications and a "testing toolkit" in preparation for examinations. These initiatives have been well received. Parents say that they are kept well informed about their child's progress and what needs to be done to improve their children's performance. Parents feel that the school provides their children with interesting work that promotes academic prowess and mature standards of behavior. Next steps for the school include looking at ways in which to encourage more communication from parents about their children's learning needs.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The core curriculum is expertly mapped so as to provide detailed information about the progress and achievement of students. The emphasis placed on providing balanced literacy and balanced math programs in all self-contained classes has been effective in

creating this information. In a broader context the school provides innovative additions to the curriculum that students really enjoy. The curriculum is organized around research themes, for each grade, based on ancient societies, the American colonies and social-political movements for a particular decade from the post-Civil War era to the present. Students in grades 6 and 7 also have the opportunity to take part in a stimulating enrichment program. This variety in the curriculum aligned to field trips provides a context for teachers to provide interesting lessons that inspire students to work hard and want to learn. Teachers are skillful in planning instruction so that it matches up with the different needs of the students in the class. Although in some high achieving classes challenge was not consistently sustained to ensure that students are continuously working at their level of potential.

The administration continually searches for creative and efficient ways of utilizing the school's budget and resources. The decision to use resources to reduce class sizes creates increased opportunities for individualized approaches in teaching. The impact has been on sustained and improved performance, particularly in math. The development of the enrichment program is another good indicator of the creative use of the budget to meet the needs of students. The administration is conscientious in adjusting the curriculum in response to perceived underachievement in any area. A reflection of this commitment is the way in which the school has emphasized the development of student writing skills in all subjects and the use of common rubrics. There is a high level of mutual trust and respect around the school. The relationships between students and adults are very positive and supportive. Students get on very well with each other. Parents talk about the high expectations for students to behave well in the classroom and in other areas of the school. They say that there are very few incidents of poor behavior, and that "it is a safe school". Students are also aware of the high expectations that are placed upon them.

**Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to 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 has clearly identified the accountability of senior leaders in relation to improving the quality of instruction. A log of observations is efficiently completed which shows regular monitoring and identification of areas for improvement for individual teachers. In consequence, the administration provides a wide range of professional support to staff in order to make them even better at their jobs. Staff working within grades have regular opportunities to share ideas through common planning time, and by seeing each other teach. Teachers say they value the opportunity to review each other's work.

The school provides effective support to those who are new to the profession or new to this school. This includes arrangements for "buddy teachers" and mentoring by the math and literacy coaches. Teachers go out of their way to provide mutual support for each other. One said that the school was "her family away from home". Teachers consult each other if they are having difficulty in an area of instruction, and say they will always receive supportive comments from their colleagues on how to improve their practice. The administration makes full use of individual strengths and expertise identified through regular observations of staff. The effective use of staff is also a strong feature of the guidance and support arrangements which operate for the benefit of students in the school. The principal runs an efficiently-organized school which has an orderly, calm and productive feel to it. The students, staff and parents are very proud of their school; it is

tidy, well decorated and well cared for. One student said about the principal, "He is often around the school seeing how well we are doing."

The school provides students with numerous opportunities to develop interests through partnership arrangements such as the Gilder Lehman Institute for American studies. The school also provides good opportunities for students to make charitable contributions to the community through its involvement with the Leukemia Lymphoma Society.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

Staff work hard, through regular individual conferences alongside students, to make sure that each student knows exactly how well they have done and what they need to do next in order to improve. Well-established structures enable the administration to measure the progress of the different groups, classes and grades. However, interim objectives in relation to whole school goals are not as clearly defined and as such are not easily measurable. The school has general indicators for these objectives but has not adequately specified monitoring accountabilities or timeframes for this to be done. As a consequence, it is difficult to evaluate the monitoring of ongoing initiatives, such as the impact of literacy models in classes.

The administration and faculty have worked systematically to ensure that there is a careful evaluation of each individual student's progress through regular moderation of work and the creation of assessment portfolios. A significant part of this process is the resetting of milestones for achievement for individual students. The implementation of these moderating processes has been successful in complementing the drive to raise student achievement. The school has gone a long way to providing goals for groups of students, such as the improvement in reading and writing for English language learners and special education students.

The school is being proactive in its plans, through professional development, to support staff in their understanding of the planned changes in periodic assessment procedures. It is the intention that teachers should have every available tool at their disposal when planning instruction. The principal has set out a clear program for improvement and development. Through his example and open discussion, he has made sure that everyone, including staff, parents and students, are fully aware of his vision. He has created a very effective context for this vision to be realized.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Herbert S Eisenberg</b>	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>				X	

<b>Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.</b>					
<b>To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .</b>	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?				X	
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?			X		
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?			X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				X	

<b>Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.</b>					
<b>To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .</b>	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?				X	
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?				X	
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?			X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>				X	

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.**

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?			X		
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				X	

**Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?				X	
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other's classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another's instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>				X	

**Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school's plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.2 the school's plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?				X	
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?				X	
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to make strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?				X	
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan's interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?				X	
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>				X	