



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Hernando Desoto School

Elementary School 130

**143 Baxter Street
New York
NY 10013**

Principal: Lily Din Woo

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Lead Reviewer: Diana Shepherd

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Hernando Desoto is an elementary school with 1082 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 2.6% Black, 5.4% Hispanic, 4% White, and 88.1% Asian students. The student body includes 24% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 97.8%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 66% eligibility.

The school is an empowerment school and has the freedom to design its own curriculum and to buy in consultant support as judged necessary.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The tireless striving to achieve the vision of the principal and her staff drives this excellent and well-organized community school ensuring good outcomes for all.
- The school is a stimulating and motivating environment where students enjoy learning and over 97% attend consistently every week.
- The principal and assistant principal monitor the impact of individual plans for all students with great care.
- The broad and creative curriculum offers challenge and opportunity for students and staff leading to high standards and a range of achievements.
- The school uses qualitative and quantitative data exceedingly well to plan an engaging and stimulating curriculum and, as a result, all students greatly enjoy learning.
- Well-differentiated instruction ensures that all learners make very good progress and a significant number reach the higher grades.
- Thorough analysis of achievement data supports well-targeted intervention services, which enhance the learning and accelerate the progress of special education students.
- The excellent support for English language learners ensures that rapidly achieve proficiency.
- The professional development program systematically builds on teachers' strengths to develop interactive and confident instruction.
- The school has developed highly effective partnerships which ensure very high levels of additional funding and support the very good achievement of all students

What the school needs to improve

- Develop a series of rubrics that details the continuum for the school's writing standards and expectations for all of the students across the grades.
- Incorporate the use of the newly purchased technology into curriculum planning and teaching throughout the school.
- Expand the needs assessments for the staff to further develop their professional development.

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 outstanding.

This is a very successful school, which has made good progress since the last review, specifically in the area of strategic planning. As it is an empowerment school it is not required to have an inquiry team, but the principal has instigated a comparable child study to explore the reasons for underachievement in the school. This study has served to deepen the teachers' understanding about learning through collaboration and discussion. The school is very high achieving and students enjoy learning in a creative learning environment and rarely miss a day's school.

The school uses a wide range of data very effectively to make and review plans, which ensure that every student makes at least good progress. Special education students and English language learners do very well because of well-targeted interventions and differentiated instruction. Professional development is extremely thorough and fully responsive to the needs of teachers and aligns with school goals. The curriculum is broad and provides excellent opportunities for students to develop their interests and talents through learning art, music and a wide range of other activities. In addition, the core curriculum is well-focused and kept under constant review. This results in lively and differentiated instruction, which students engage with and enjoy. The school has very good relationships with parents who actively support the school. There are regular opportunities for parents to engage with the school regarding student progress and celebration of achievements and many parents attend.

The administration has significantly strengthened strategic planning. In order to build leadership capacity, the principal has hired an additional assistant principal with responsibility for data leadership, which is already improving the use of data across the school and supporting the understanding of student achievement. The school has used the Quality Review process well to understand its strengths and areas for development.

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 outstanding.

The school's use of both quantitative and qualitative data is very good. Administrators maintain a rigorous overview of achievement, which informs all strategic planning, including academic intervention, and enables the school to plan a highly personalized curriculum. They use qualitative data alongside the quantitative to give a picture of the whole child, which enables the teachers to ensure that all students can access instruction.

The school disaggregates all data and can chart the progress made by all groups over time. In particular, special needs students and English language learners continue to make good progress because of the clear focus on monitoring and evaluating individual progress. Achievement in math is very good with a very high number of students exceeding the standard in both grades 4 and 5. In English language arts the percentages of students across all grades reaching Levels 3 and 4 is increasing year on year. This is a clear indicator that all students have made good progress in both areas. Special education students achieve very well. The school maps all interventions provided to support their achievement. Administrators disaggregate the data in order to understand which groups are making progress and which interventions have been successful. As a result, they can respond quickly to adjust plans where necessary. The child study, which replaces the inquiry team, has significantly supported teachers to understand the reasons for underachievement and to plan effectively to address them. The teachers meet in small groups to engage in professional discussion and shared analysis relating to each child. This professional discussion has successfully underpinned their learning. The school analyzes its own performance carefully against its benchmark schools. All staff members are rightly expected to contribute to the data systems and there is good training to ensure they can do this with confidence.

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 outstanding.

The principal has great determination that this successful school will not stand still and the whole staff plan constantly for improvement. Learning at Hernando Desoto is highly personalized. The principal and assistant principal carefully monitor the impact of individual plans for all students, which underpin all learning. These plans have clear interim goals and, in response to last year’s Quality Review, the school works hard to make them rigorous and measurable. This practice keeps the achievement of all groups, including the highest achievers, clearly in view.

Teachers are accountable for the performance of each student and they identify those at risk, providing additional support through academic intervention. This highly focused small-group work ensures that the majority of students make the grade. This includes those students identified as being at risk of promotion at the start of the year. The student personnel team monitors the progress of special education students against their individual education plan goals and shares the recommendations for improvement with parents. Parents are highly engaged in the process and appreciate the quality of support given to their children. English language learners benefit from structured after-school test preparation for the NYSESLAT. Because of this intervention, the majority of students test proficient within a year, but the school continues to give support as they recognize that students may continue to struggle with comprehension and writing after the test. The positive impact of this is evident through the improvements in all tests scores and in the confidence displayed by all students in their work.

The school ensures that parents and students all understand their high expectations. They have very well considered procedures for orientation, which clearly articulate these expectations. Parents are very appreciative of the work of the school. They like the openness of the leadership and praise the level of care the school gives to both pastoral and academic issues.

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 outstanding.

The curriculum is extremely broad and engaging. Learning is great fun. Learning environments across the whole school are print rich and offer high levels of scaffolding for learning. Stimulating displays line the corridors, covering the range of subjects. Teachers display the work thoughtfully, particularly in the younger grades. Art has a high profile and so do music, chorus and ballroom dancing. Students have access to a very wide range of activities, many of which contribute to the development of personal discipline and teamwork. The diet is rich and many students participate and excel, building confidence and self-esteem. In the core curriculum, teachers have developed maps, which are designed to meet the grade standard. From the maps, they have produced unit plans which are regularly reviewed in the light of student outcomes and which inform instruction. Teachers work collaboratively to ensure that instruction is differentiated and are held accountable through the regular and rigorous focus on outcomes. Excellent examples of differentiated instruction were observed during the review and, in all classes, students are engaged and highly motivated by learning.

The principal makes very good use of the budget and the school is very well resourced. Teachers have palm pilots to enable them to access data quickly and they use them often and well. Technology has been a major area for investment in order to improve the use of computers by both students and teachers. There is evidence that students are using them well for research and design as well as for publishing work, but overall the use of technology in classrooms is not consistent. The quality of books in every classroom is exceptional and supports the focus on reading. The principal recognizes that teachers need a dedicated space for training, planning and discussion and has created a space where this can happen. Teachers appreciate the value she gives their work and respond well to the culture of learning. As a result, retention in the school is excellent. Student attendance in the school has been averaging 97% for the last three years, but this is not good enough and the focus for this year is those students who struggle to get to school in order to reach 100%

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 outstanding.

Formal observations do happen, but it is more common for teachers to be held accountable through stringent informal observation and the monitoring of outcomes. Differentiated instruction is the focus for all targeted work with teachers. The formal discussions, which have happened because of the child study, have deepened teachers’ understanding of the purpose and practice of differentiation and this is evident in every classroom.

Professional development is very strong and organic. The professional developer works very closely with the administration and the teachers to build confidence and competence across all staff. She develops programs based on the staff survey from the previous year and all staff buys in to what they need. The program is consistent and always includes

support with planning, team instruction and observation. All work with teachers is logged and these logs include goals for improvement and timescales, which are regularly reviewed. The primary focus is on reflection and encouraging teachers as decision-makers within the classroom, evaluating their own performance and seeking improvement. All teachers engage well with the process and the principal regularly monitors the training logs. Paraprofessionals also receive support and training. The mentors for new teachers are trained in the school and work to ensure consistency in both standards and approach. The result overall is good instruction across all classrooms, which engages and interests students, teaching them to be independent and confident learners.

The assistant principal co-ordinates all academic intervention and guidance services. She manages very clear and overarching systems, which draw together all the services offered to students and their families and uses data from a range of sources, such as Acuity, to support applications for help. Behavior plans have a positive focus and are in place for a small number of students. They are monitored regularly and revised as necessary. Generally, behavior is very good. The principal has developed excellent partnerships in the community, which offer great benefits to the school. Through these, she funds a range of activities such as violin instruction and ballroom dancing. Dignitaries and visitors from other schools who use it as a model of excellent practice often visit the school.

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 outstanding.

The school plans extremely well for improvement. The leadership uses very rigorous analysis of performance data to inform all goals and regularly monitors progress against interim benchmarks. As a result, the school's overview of performance and progress is thorough and constantly updated. Teacher improvement is equally rigorous and the very good system for professional development ensures that training is proactive and responsive, integrating the needs of the teachers and the school in a way, which ensures that all teachers engage and grow.

The administration uses information from a raft of diagnostic testing to measure the effectiveness of plans. Teachers are required to produce evidence of improvement for each student to support judgments relating to the quality of instruction and the effectiveness of interventions. The principal and her team collect this information monthly and use it strategically to identify areas for improvement and to set new and revised goals. This constant focus ensures that no area of the school remains unchallenged. The principal's goals year-on-year build the strategic overview for the school and, together with the Comprehensive Education Plan, drive development. In order to build leadership capacity, the principal has started to involve the department leaders and the lead teachers in the process of review. This improves capacity and shares the responsibility for improvement. It also helps to share the vision, which drives the school. She believes that all students can achieve at the highest level and works tirelessly to achieve this. Her commitment to excellence and her insistence that teachers, as well as students, must have the best opportunities to learn have built a strong community where all own learning. She is highly respected by parents and this is because of her commitment to the lives of their children and her ever-open door.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Hernando Desoto School	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
Quality Score					X

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.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	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
Overall score for Quality Statement 1					X

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.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	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
Overall score for Quality Statement 2					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
Overall score for Quality Statement 3					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
Overall score for Quality Statement 4					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 makes 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
Overall score for Quality Statement 5					X

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped