



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Donald Hertz School

Elementary-Middle School 083

**950 Rhineland Avenue
Bronx
NY 10462**

Principal: Benjamin P Soccodato

Dates of review: November 26 - 28, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Bruce Berry

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Donald Hertz is an elementary-middle school with 1635 students from kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 14% Black, 48% Hispanic, 24% White, and 12% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 11.5% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 92.4%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 100% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's high-quality leadership and management is the driving force in creating a culture for continuously improving the achievement of the students.
- The senior leaders and the teachers work as a united team to provide a caring environment where students enjoy learning.
- There are excellent support systems in place for the students in greatest need of improvement, who make good gains in their achievement levels.
- The school has effective data systems for monitoring the progress of students, classrooms and subjects.
- The whole school community has exceedingly high expectations that students will achieve their maximum potential.
- The exciting range of curriculum subjects provides students with excellent challenge and high levels of interest in their learning.
- The effective differentiated instruction gives provides engagement and enjoyment for the students.
- The high-quality professional development programs create excellent opportunities for teachers to extend their knowledge and skills and to share good practice.
- The school has a caring and respectful culture, where students' academic and social development is well supported.
- Parents have high praise for the quality of education and support their children receive from all the staff in the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve the setting of whole school improvement goals by the inclusion of differentiated goals at grade and subject levels.
- Refine the planning process by setting interim goals in order to monitor the school's progress in meeting its long-term goals.
- Further develop the school's capacity in the use of data to include regular reviews of the performance and progress of all the subgroups at classroom, grade and whole school levels.

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.

Since the last Quality Review, the school has further developed its effectiveness in the use of computerized data systems for improving student outcomes. They have expanded the Saturday program and are making good use of technology in their instruction and in classroom activities. The principal provides high-quality leadership, which is driving the culture of continuously improving the achievement outcomes of the students. The staff in the school work effectively together to provide a caring and safe environment for students to enjoy their learning. The school has developed excellent data systems to provide information for use in planning the curriculum and the classroom instruction.

There is an exciting range of curriculum activities, which give students academic challenge and create an environment where learning is fun. The strong arts curriculum gives students the opportunity to expand cultural knowledge. There are very strong communications with parents, who have high praise for the education and care the school is giving their children. The students show high levels of maturity and good behavior in the classroom and as they move around school. The school does not, at present, base whole school goals on the outcomes of students at grade and subject levels. The school's plans do not presently include interim goals for measuring the progress it is making in reaching its long-term goals. The data systems are not yet used to provide regular updates of the progress of sub-groups at classroom, grade and whole school levels.

The inquiry team is focusing its research on two groups of students who are in need of improvement, but are not receiving services now.

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 school has effective data systems, which are used well to monitor the progress of students' achievement levels in classrooms and subjects. Teachers receive effective training on the new City data system. They receive benchmark achievement data for each student and a full history of the student's progress throughout their time in school.

All marking period assessments are standardized by the use of a common marking policy across the school. The teachers have meticulously analyzed the outcomes of the first Acuity test in English language arts. They are making excellent use of the information to differentiate their instruction to meet the learning needs of individual and groups of students. Special education students have excellent support from teachers and, as a result, make very good gains in their achievement levels. Read 180 is used on a daily basis with the students. The analysis of the progress of each student gives the teachers valuable information of the skills in need of further development. English language learners make rapid progress in their achievement levels through the excellent support they receive. Teachers use the external test data to identify particular skills each student is lacking. Specialized teachers work collaboratively with each classroom teacher to provide effective support for the students' learning.

The school groups the high achieving students together and provides them with an accelerated program of learning. There is an excellent lunchtime enrichment program designed to extend their knowledge and skills. The school does not yet regularly use data to review the performance and progress of all the subgroups at classroom, grade and whole school levels. The senior leaders review the year on year progress for each subject, grade and classroom. The growth report is used extremely well to track the progress of individuals and groups of students over time. The information reveals that good gains in progress are made in mathematics, with smaller gains in English language arts. The school's performance and progress compares favorably with its peer schools and with three other local schools with similar student populations.

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 sets measurable annual goals for improvement and develops action plans to support the goals. The goals, at present, are general goals based on subject areas. The school does not yet set differentiated goals at grade and subject levels, which capture the present and the projected achievements of the students. However, teachers provide challenging goals for individual students based on their learning needs as identified through conferencing and testing. Students in greatest need of improvement receive excellent support and make good gains in their achievement levels. The school has two child study teams, which discuss individual students and identify programs to support their learning. Academic intervention teachers work effectively with grade level teachers to plan support and intervention for students. They receive further excellent support at lunchtime, after-school and in the Saturday academy.

The school has exceedingly high expectations that students will achieve their full potential and that they will show respect and maturity in their behavior. This is fully demonstrated by the energetic way in which students engage in their learning and in their calm and sensible conduct around the school. Parents praise the quality of education and support their children receive in the school. There are excellent communications to keep parents fully informed of the progress their children are making. They receive regular progress reports and are able to discuss any concerns with the teachers or the principal. The regular parent newsletter keeps parents updated with all

the activities in the school. Workshops are available for parents and cover a wide range of topics such as English language arts, mathematics, computers and test preparation.

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 broad and balanced curriculum provides students with excellent challenge and they express how much they enjoy their learning. Teachers use running records and conferencing to assess the progress students make in balanced literacy. Tests, quizzes and games provide assessments to measure the progress students make in the Everyday Mathematics program. The science lab program gives students excellent opportunities to take part in practical research work. The school has developed an excellent literacy through the arts program. This is enhancing the literacy content across the curriculum and exposing the students to a wide range of cultural experiences. The arts curriculum covers a range of subjects including art, music, drama, poetry and instruments. Teachers are increasingly making good use of computers in their instruction and as part of the students’ learning activities.

Senior leaders regularly conduct effective walkthroughs of the classrooms to check the progress of the students. They regularly review the teachers’ assessment binders and the students’ portfolios to ensure that the students are making good progress. The teachers create a highly effective learning environment, which gives high engagement and enjoyment for the students’ learning. The learning activities are well matched to the students’ individual learning needs. Budgeting, staffing and scheduling are used to provide effective support for the curriculum and instruction. The school is employing two extra teachers for the additional number of English language learners who need extra support in developing the language skills. Technology is regularly updated with the purchase of SMART boards and projection carts. The science lab equipment gives the students an excellent opportunity to take part in science experiments. There is a respectful and caring culture in the school. The teachers give excellent support for students in their learning and are always available for them to discuss any matter of concern. When asked about their feelings about their school, one student said, “We are lucky to have this school.” Another indicator of how much the students value the quality of the education they receive is the high attendance rates, which is supported by good procedures and a reward scheme for the students.

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 school has an excellent system for monitoring the quality and effectiveness of classroom instruction. Several teams of staff undertake academic inquiry review (AIR) walks, which are part of a systematic review of all aspects of classroom activities. The schedule for the walks is planned with an agreed focus, which can include instruction practice, the learning environment, teacher’s assessments and student work. The AIR

walks have a major impact on the quality of instruction and on the engagement of the students in their learning. The teachers have their individual professional development needs identified in conversations with senior leaders and in classroom walkthroughs. Support is provided through school-based coaches and external courses. Teachers regularly have opportunities to visit one another's classrooms to share a good practice. There is a very strong team structure in the school. All grade teachers have valuable common preparation time each week to plan the curriculum and their instruction in order to maintain consistency across the grade. The principal meets regularly with the assistant principals and with a team of grade leaders to discuss all aspects of the work on each grade and to review the progress of the students. The child study team and the academic intervention services plan effective programs to support at risk students. There is an excellent mentoring program for all new teachers to the school, which is overseen by the new teacher induction committee. They have a school-based mentor and an external mentor who provide a session for them prior to starting at the school and they receive excellent support in developing their skills as a classroom practitioner.

The school provides very strong guidance and advisory support for all the students. One of the three guidance counselors works with students and parents when choosing a high school. The school is a well-ordered community where the students feel safe and well cared for. There are high levels of student engagement in the classroom and their behavior inside and outside the classroom is immaculate. The school has attracted a large number of partners to provide excellent extension activities for the students. They include sports and arts classes as well as a full academic program to meet the needs of individual students. Trips are provided for the science fair winners, with visits to Broadway shows and tours of Manhattan for the students.

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.

Teachers provide students with clearly defined and measurable goals for their improvement in their achievement levels. They regularly use periodic assessments to monitor the progress students are making and to adjust the curriculum and instruction when the need arises. Teachers use data well to plan interventions for students and to change their grouping of students in response to the data. For example, teachers have very quickly analyzed the students' responses to the new Acuity English language arts test questions for differentiating their instruction. There is not, at present, a consistent approach to the setting of whole school, classroom and subject goals. The school sets whole school annual goals that are not yet fully aligned to the identified goals for individual students. The school's plans are not supported, at present, by interim goals in order to monitor progress made in meeting its long-term goals. School leaders regularly review the progress students make in their achievement levels. They make strategic decisions on the changes needed to support teachers in improving the curriculum and their instruction. There is a whole school collaborative process for reviewing the previous year's curriculum and in planning the curriculum for the year ahead. Teachers are very much involved in developing curriculum maps and pacing calendars each year. All members of the school community work as one in sharing the vision to improve the achievement of the students.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Donald Hertz 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 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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X	