



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Louisa M Alcott School for Science and
Technology**

Public School 10

**511 7th Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11215**

Principal: Concetta Ritorto

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Reviewer: Mike Sutton

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall evaluation

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The school is a pre-kindergarten through 5th grade elementary school serving the Park Slope community of Brooklyn. There are currently 571 students enrolled. The main ethnic groups comprise 60% Hispanic students, 15% Black, 19% White and 6% Asian. The proportion of students who are English language learners is around 22%. The school also enrolls a significant number of students with disabilities due to its barrier free status. Around a third of the school's students have individual education plans.

Levels of attendance are in line with the City school average of 92% and a little better than the average for similar schools. The proportion of children who receive Title 1 funding is 67%, which is lower than for similar schools but higher than City schools generally.

The school has taken on the status of an Empowerment School. These schools have more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their school community. Empowerment Schools are free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with, and benefit from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school is very well led and the principal is extremely well supported by her assistant principal and senior staff.
- The school has hard working, dedicated and highly supportive ancillary, paraprofessional and office staff who work very well with the teachers.
- The school has an extremely positive climate for learning where daily routines run smoothly and everyone constantly strives to improve further on what they do.
- The school very successfully integrates special education students into mainstream classes, making good use of paraprofessionals in doing so.
- The school is working well as one of the new Empowerment group of schools and is making very good use of data on individual student's progress to plan the next steps in their learning.
- The school provides swift intervention for students who need extra help or further challenges.
- The school works extremely well with parents and keeps them fully informed about their children's progress.
- The students make good progress in English, mathematics and science through a wide, rich and stimulating curriculum that fully includes the arts.
- There are high levels of effective teamwork and collaborative planning across all aspects of the school's work.
- The school has well managed teams of teachers with roles and responsibilities which are clearly defined and widely understood.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to develop and refine medium and longer term improvement plans.
- Improve the professional development opportunities for paraprofessional and assistant staff.
- Continue to improve the skills of the administrative staff in using computers to analyze data on student achievements.
- Analyze more thoroughly the data the school has relating to the achievement of gender groups.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

This is a school which seeks every opportunity to improve what it does for its students. Led by a thoughtful, perceptive and caring principal and her assistant, the staff has created a climate where students can thrive educationally, physically, socially and emotionally. There is a pervading sense of teamwork. Everyone knows their role and how it relates to others and the school as a whole. Key leadership teams play a vital part in ensuring that students' progress is regularly assessed and work planned to match their needs. The curriculum is broad and interesting and makes full use of every opportunity to embrace the arts. The school is very successfully integrating special education students into mainstream classes. The teams of paraprofessionals and other assistants link up well with teachers and play an important role in making this integration work. Students also play their parts in welcoming and supporting those who have differing needs into their classrooms, their work and their lives. The school works very well with parents, adding strongly to the overall sense of community. Any student problems, academic or social are picked up quickly and addressed through a united approach. The end result is a school where students' achievements have risen steadily in recent years and now outstrip those of similar schools and solidly match what City schools achieve overall.

The school is never complacent and seeks every chance to find new or better ways to raise students' performance. The decision to sign up as an Empowerment School typifies this thinking. Already the school has grasped new opportunities through the project to think about and improve some aspects of its assessment strategy and how to improve further the pedagogic skills of staff. New resources have been purchased and a development group set up to look at how best to use assessment to take the school forward further. The impact of new assessments has been to enhance what was already in place and enable the school to help each student progress to the best of their capabilities.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

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

The school consistently gathers a large quantity of data on students' achievements. The teachers use a range of objective assessments to do this and supplement these with more general observations. As an Empowerment School the decision was taken to widen the range of materials used for assessment. The school looked closely at the benefits to be derived from these and what works best with different age groups and for different purposes. The teachers and school leaders have a very clear understanding of the achievement of individual students in core skills of reading, writing, mathematics and science. They track the progress of individuals over time and can quickly spot where

progress has stalled. The assessment of special education students is thorough and well organized.

The school has a very good understanding of the substantial progress it has made in recent years and of its very positive position relative to other schools. It continues to challenge itself to do even better. The outcome for students is that the great majority makes very good progress, and enjoys learning. Where there are problems the school works well with parents and students to address them. Nobody struggles along, unnoticed.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student’s next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student’s learning.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

The school makes exceptionally good use of data it gathers. As a result, the school has an accurate and regularly updated picture of how each student, class, grade and subject is doing. It knows how well different ethnic groups are achieving but does not look as closely at potential differences in achievement between gender groups. The school recognizes that further training in the use of new assessment tools is necessary to enable it to probe more thoroughly into such issues.

There is strong collaboration at all levels and everyone knows where their responsibilities lie. The assessment information gathered at class and student level feeds into the work of teams of teachers at grade and administrative level. For example, the teachers evaluate each month the achievement levels of every student in reading and mathematics. This information is fed through to a team led by the principal and her assistant which then looks closely at where there may be problems developing. The levels and nature of support for those already receiving it are reviewed in light of the progress the data indicates is being made. Particular attention is paid to those students on the borderline of being ‘held over’. Immediate support is put in place to address areas of weakness. The school also recognizes through this system, those students who are already achieving very well and devises ways to offer these students still more challenge. Where social or emotional problems may be factors in reduced progress, the student counselor is able to play a key coordination role because he is linked closely to the different teams.

Parents are fully involved in the life of the school. A wide range of good quality documents are used to communicate regularly all aspects of school life to parents and to teachers. Every parent gets a monthly written update on their child’s reading and mathematics level. Where concerns about their child’s progress are noted, the parents are involved immediately. The progress of special education students is checked rigorously. Good use is made of the observations carried out by the paraprofessionals and support staff who work with individual students and their teachers. The progress of other individuals such as English language learners is checked equally carefully. The overall impact of these clear, precise and widely understood actions is that no student misses out. Everyone gets the right sort of work to help them make further progress. Individual goals are set and the school knows exactly how well it is doing in helping meet these. The students engage fully in their lessons and this is a strong contributory factor in the rapid progress in the last few years.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

The curriculum has been chosen carefully. The mathematics and English fit well with mandated requirements and with the assessment arrangements the school uses. There have been thoughtful and innovative advances. The social studies curriculum has been revised and now affords good continuity and meets the needs of the students much better. Science has been given a huge boost through greatly enhanced resources and the use of specific teachers with interest and expertise in the subject. Many of the students say they have been ‘switched on’ to science as a result. The arts have a prominent role also. The school makes every use of outside organizations such as Art Studio or the Metropolitan Opera to provide new and vivid experiences for the students. The curriculum is adjusted by teachers to meet the needs of the students. They differentiate work, particularly in meeting the needs of those students with individual education plans. The school budget is focused strongly on developing the students’ needs. The purchase of many more reading books in recent years was driven by the weaknesses in reading shown through the assessment data. The school now has a huge range of books of all sorts, leveled by difficulty but also grouped by genre, author or interest. The library is a focal point for this work, driven by the English coach and librarian and supported fully by the administration. The school makes good use of its entire staff. There is very good support for special education students in mainstream and self contained classes. Parents report this as a very positive feature of the school.

The teachers know their students very well and students say they feel safe and always have someone to turn to if they have a problem. Teachers are held fully to account for their work and the administration has a clear overview of the strengths and areas for development in different grades, subjects and classes. There are coherent strategies to bring about any necessary improvements.

Attendance is good and the school is alert to any particular problems. Students enjoy coming to school because the work is interesting, varied and pitched at the right level. Regular surveys of students, staff and parents confirm this as well as pin pointing further areas for improvement.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

The principal and her assistant have created a team of dedicated professionals who all have the same goals and high aspirations for the students. They have a wide range of skills and attributes to enhance the education provided. The one relative weakness is the ability of teachers and particularly the administration to use computers sufficiently well enough to handle data. The majority of records are kept manually and while these are immaculately maintained, analysis of outcomes and of trends for particular groups is a substantial task.

Professional development for teachers is well managed and evaluated in terms of its impact on students’ achievements. The school schedule is adjusted to allow for

professional development to take place in grade teams. The assistant staff and paraprofessionals are served less well by this arrangement as they are not scheduled to attend these meetings. They have good training for their specific roles in supporting particular children but they are not included sufficiently in general curriculum planning and assessment training. The principal and her assistant are frequently out and about in classrooms and carry out many informal as well as formal observations. They give constant advice and support to teachers. The school has evolved a culture of mutual peer evaluation and the staff is grasping the opportunity afforded through being an Empowerment School to explore innovative ways of taking this further. The principal is very widely respected and, as demonstrated through improvements already accomplished and from those in the pipe-line, that she has very strong capacity to continue to develop the school. The work of the different teams in the schools dovetails effectively. Their roles and functions are well thought out. Daily and more occasional routines, such as using outside agencies for the curriculum or for advice and support, all run smoothly and effectively. The broadening of the curriculum has acted as a stimulus for improvements in basic skills. There is increasing use of knowledge in one subject to resource another as for example with students writing poems in English lessons about subjects from social studies.

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 well-developed features.

The school has a very clear view of how it is doing on a week to week basis and across the school year. It has clear markers for the progress of individual students and particularly those on the edge of failing to make the grade in key annual tests. The coaches and subject leaders have a good overview of their areas of responsibility and plan professional development to address the areas of the curriculum that have the least strong outcome for students. The school's longer term planning is less assured. Its Comprehensive Education Plan is used well to analyze the strengths and weaknesses across all of its work. It drives the school well during the year. The weakness is in medium or longer term planning. The school recognizes that it needs to prioritise its aims into realistic timescales and has made a good start on a longer term plan as part of the Empowerment Program.

Planning across the short term is good, and enables precise, timely and accurate interventions. Plans are revised swiftly where necessary and the impact is to maintain the momentum in students' progress. Looking at trends or outcomes has not been fully considered. It has not set any more distant, measurable goals for longer term improvement in subjects. With new data coming on stream from the Education Department, the school has the tools to develop a longer term strategic plan based on analysis of such information. At the moment there are too few members of staff with the computer skills needed for this analysis. The school has already acquired the training to remedy this in the near future.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Louisa M. Alcott School for Science and Technology (PS 010)	∅	✓	+
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	