



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Isaac Bildersee School
Intermediate School 068
956 East 82nd Street
Brooklyn
NY 11236**

Principal: Mr. Alex Fralin

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Reviewer: Alan Boyle

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Isaac Bildersee School is a middle school with 1145 students enrolled in grades 6 through 8. Most (89%) of the students are Black, with 8% Hispanic, 2% White and 1% Indian or Asian. About 15% are special education students. Just over 5% of students are classified as English language learners, most of whom speak Haitian Creole as their first language. In 2005, just over 68% of students were Title 1 eligible, which is in line with the City average. Attendance last year was 89.7%; this was two percentage points lower than the City average and also the average for similar schools.

The school is in a turnaround situation, following a troubled period that required intervention and a change of leadership in 2003. The school is organized into three academies, each with its own assistant principal and separate theme. The themes are: The Academy of Entrepreneurship and Law; The Academy of Urban Planning and Environmental Design and The Academy of Global, American and Community Connections

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The recent improvements in academic standards and students' behavior have raised morale in the school.
- The academy structure provides a safe and secure learning environment for students.
- The focus on the development of the whole student and provision of a broad and balanced education is helping to improve achievement.
- The mutual respect shown by staff and students creates high quality relationships.
- The support provided by the school for the professional learning of the faculty is strengthening and developing teachers' instructional knowledge.
- Collaborative working throughout the school and high staff morale reinforce the positive atmosphere.
- Effective partnerships with outside organizations that are focused on student achievement broaden students' horizons.
- The monthly implementation plans with clear milestones, derived from the Comprehensive Education Plan, give clear direction to the school.
- The dispersed leadership throughout the school and the growing capacity to make things even better is helping to build long term success.
- The principal's positive attitudes and actions have fostered optimism, restored confidence and regenerated enthusiasm throughout the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop a coherent set of systems to easily monitor and evaluate the impact of teachers' instruction on students' learning.
- Develop a tracking system that is manageable and easy to manipulate, so that the school can record all essential data about students' achievements from grade to grade as students make progress through the school.
- Increase the support to teachers so that they understand how to analyze all the data available and use it to plan their lessons with greater precision, according to the individual needs of the students.
- Put in place a target-setting process for each individual student, in every subject, that enables the school to draw this information together to form targets for each class, each academy and across each grade.
- Provide more focused support to those low performing students who do not need the support of the academic intervention service but who struggle to just make the grade each year.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school with some well-developed and some undeveloped features.

Smiles have returned to faces at Isaac Bildersee School. Parents, staff and students all talk about the way the school has recently improved. Sometimes it is hard to get a word in edgeways. They know that things are getting better and feel positive about its future. Evidence from this review confirms that their optimism is justified.

Restructuring in 2003 created three academies in the school, each with its own distinct identity. This provides students with greater security for their learning as they are part of a smaller unit, taught by the same team of teachers. The assistant principal in each academy gets to know about the needs of all their students in depth. Students appreciate this and feel cared for. Older students, teachers and parents all confirm that students' behavior has improved. It is hard to imagine now that the school was once characterized by unruly students.

Great efforts have been made over the last three years to improve the quality of instruction. These efforts have been successful. With good support from outside organizations, the school displays effective collaboration and sharing of good practice across the faculty. The principal leads by example and generates positive thinking throughout the school. Good plans are in place and capacity is growing. Academic achievements have improved with the school making annual yearly progress in English language arts and science for the first time in 2005. Mathematics has not improved to the same extent yet, but there is a rising trend. Isaac Bildersee School is close to its tipping point for making more significant improvements in its test scores, but in each grade, there is still a group of students who struggle to make progress despite the fact they do not qualify for extra help.

The school gathers plenty of useful data about students' attainments but has not yet established a manageable system to collect essential data for teachers to use to drive instruction. Such a system will require further support for the faculty to understand how best to use these data to differentiate their teaching. There is no system to track students' progress and facilitate target setting for each individual. Without these systems, the school cannot easily monitor and evaluate students' progress.

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 undeveloped.

The school collects a wide range of data about students' progress. There is a good balance between external tests and teachers' own assessments. For example, the school uses Diagnostic Reading Assessments as the basis for differentiating instruction in English language arts. A new screening assessment for mathematics is in process. These

assessments provide teachers with an understanding of individual students' achievement and the overall performance of their class. The school is not yet able to easily compare these data between different classes, or between different academies, and across each grade.

The State tests provide a detailed analysis showing the relative performance of different ethnic groups, English language learners and special education students. Delay between tests and the publication of results makes this summative assessment of limited value to the school. The school has not begun to develop its own manageable system to gather essential data for each student in a format that would enable the school to quickly identify patterns in the performance and progress of different groups of students across the school. The lack of relevant data also means that the school is not in a position to assist teachers to plan their lessons with greater precision, attending to the individual needs of all students. There is no tracking system in place to record all essential data about students' attainments from grade to grade as students make progress through the school. This prevents the school from being sufficiently alert to any emerging patterns in different rates of progress.

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

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The diagnostic and assessment tool used by America's Choice enables school leaders and the faculty to quickly determine the school's priorities each year. This is helpful and provides reliable data from which to develop the Comprehensive Education Plan with clear long-term and intermediate goals. A monthly implementation plan is posted on the school bulletin board. This is a very effective way of maintaining the focus and direction of the school. Implementation plans are also prepared for each subject and carefully monitored by coaches. These plans are shared across the school; this is a well-developed feature.

Detailed plans are in place for those students who need additional help to keep up with the pace of learning. Intervention plans are based on careful diagnoses of students' needs. The academic intervention service team prescribes programs for these students according to their individual learning needs. There is clearly a limit on the number of students that may be supported in this way. Priority is based on need and students who have been held over more than once in a grade are identified first. Analysis of school data shows a significant group of students who fail to make enough progress as they move from grade to grade. They fall outside the remit of the academic intervention service team. For these students, it is precision by class teachers, rather than prescribed programs, that will boost their progress.

Students appreciate the dialogue they have with their teachers. They feel well informed about what they already know and what they need to do next. These goals are shared with parents. This is a secure basis on which to push students that little bit further and fully extend their learning with greater academic rigor. There are examples of great practice in the school where teachers are assertive and really challenge their students. The school is already building on this good practice and spreading it more widely.

The school does not have a target setting system in place for each individual student in every subject, drawn together to form class targets and academy targets across each

grade. Without such a system, it is more difficult to raise expectations and promote progress to higher levels in each grade.

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

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Some of the many areas of strength in the school include the recent efforts to ensure that the curriculum provides a broad and balanced education that attends to students' personal and social development as well as their academic achievement. The work of the Pride committee, for example, has made a significant contribution to restoring a calm and purposeful atmosphere in the school.

There is a genuine mutual respect between staff and students which is modeled by the staff. Students are polite and considerate towards each other. The triple academy structure helps students by keeping them in close contact with the same team of teachers. Teachers understand their students' personal and academic needs. This is a well-developed feature. Students feel safe in school; it is a secure learning environment. Attendance rates are rising, partly through targeted intervention and partly because students like to come to school more than before. This may be attributed to the improved curriculum and also to the efforts of the faculty to actively engage their students in class. Students are developing positive attitudes to learning.

Budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions are all guided by plans that are, in turn, focused on raising student achievement. Teachers are clearly responsible for improving instruction and motivating their students to learn. They do this well. Study groups and grade teams meet regularly and they are working hard to plan differentiated activities in lessons, based on the prior attainments of their students. This is undeveloped now but the faculty is making giant strides in the right direction.

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 leads by example to develop positive attitudes and actions throughout the school. Achievements are celebrated by students in daily announcements. Meetings always include items that acknowledge positive news. For example, during professional development team meetings each coach reports on recent successes as well as what they are focused on next. There is a remarkable optimism throughout the school. This has helped to restore confidence and regenerate enthusiasm amongst staff and students. The principal is well respected by staff, students and their parents. He has clearly demonstrated his capacity to make good things happen.

Leaders, faculty and staff are all committed to using data to drive instruction. Further support is already planned to improve this. Recent investments in professional development are making significant improvements to many aspects of the school. There are lots of well-developed features connected with this. For example, the social studies coach modeled a lesson and shared it with other colleagues in the same grade so that

they could contribute to students' learning in their lessons. The science coach has established study groups to jointly plan a lesson in the same grade, teach it and share the evaluations. Decisions about professional development are clearly focused on raising student achievement. Professional collaboration is well developed. This is a real professional learning community.

Dispersed leadership throughout the school is also well developed. The growing leadership capacity is the key to sustainable improvement. The principal and assistant principals regularly visit classrooms. These visits are documented and are used to support professional learning and monitor progress.

The school has a range of effective partnerships with outside organizations that are focused on student achievement. The additional resources they bring to the school are helping to enrich the curriculum, develop instructional leadership and accelerate students' learning. The school is well poised and close to its tipping point; with continued improvement, the gains made so far are set to pay off in terms of students' test scores.

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.

The monthly implementation plans, derived from the Comprehensive Education Plan, have clear measurable outcomes. These interim goals provide a well-developed framework to monitor and evaluate progress in the school. The missing pieces are specific measurable targets for student achievement in the series of tests that the school sets through the school year. The lack of a tracking system linked to specific targets in terms of students' test results makes it difficult to monitor students' progress across the whole school.

Student achievement data are used in different ways to monitor, evaluate and plan further action. For example, the school failed to make annual yearly progress in mathematics with special education students. Following this, the mathematics coach has worked with the teachers involved, who are not mathematics specialists, to support them. The academic intervention service team leader has identified students who remain at lower levels through each grade and do not receive the benefit of intervention. The English language arts coach has analyzed scores from the Diagnostic Reading Assessments between fall and spring to reveal the growth in students' reading. All these are examples of good practice. The next step is to pull them together so that the school is able to track the progress of each individual student and show the value that the school has added.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: ISAAC BILDERSEE SCHOOL (IS8)	∅	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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	