



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**The Isaac Asimov School for Science and
Literature**

Public/Middle School 99

**1120 East 10th Street
Brooklyn
NY 11230**

Principal: Gregory Pirraglia

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Reviewer: Mary Ayala

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Isaac Asimov School for Science and Literature, more commonly known as Public/Middle School 99, is a neighborhood school in east Brooklyn, serving approximately 820 students in grades pre-kindergarten through 8. The culturally diverse school population consists of 26% White, 18% Black, 20% Hispanic, and 36% Asian and other students. The surrounding area is home to recently arrived families from Pakistan, China, Russia and the Middle East, with 27 different languages spoken in student homes. With this rich mix of cultures and languages, the school is challenged to accelerate the language acquisition of its English language learners who represent 17% of the total student population, a percentage that is significantly higher than similar schools. Special education students represent only 11% of the student body and receive support primarily in inclusive settings. The school receives Title I funding. For the past few years, the school has maintained a daily student attendance rate of just over 92%, a rate shared by similar schools.

For 2006-2007, the school has been designated as an Urban Advantage Demonstration School. As a result of this distinction, middle school students have access to an enriched science curriculum, creating exit projects and participating in family visits in collaboration with the New York Aquarium. The school is one of six sites that offer SIGMA classes, District 21's gifted program in grades kindergarten through 5.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's accessibility, caring attitude, and problem-solving skills are acknowledged and appreciated by staff, students, and parents alike.
- The principal has established a culture of high expectations in which good levels of collaboration and the sharing of best practices promote students' learning.
- School leaders and faculty make good use of a broad range of information to assess student progress, and to adjust instructional practices.
- Teachers are confident in their assessments of student achievement which helps them to plan lessons that meet students' needs well.
- The wide variety of programs and additional support is well targeted and has a positive impact on students' achievement.
- Professional development is well matched to identified whole-school and individual needs.
- Staff relationships are positive and enable the sharing of ideas and best practices.
- Through good budget management, resources have been carefully developed which enhance students' experiences and promote learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine the good systems for gathering data so that they reveal, in more precise detail, the progress made by different groups of students.
- Ensure that the current decline in the achievement of eighth grade students is reversed by implementing the plans that have been developed from the analysis of assessment data.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

The school uses student data well in identifying areas of its work which require improvement, and in tracking its progress towards reaching planned goals. The administrative team, faculty, and support staff gather and analyze data from a wide variety of sources in order to inform the broad goals of the school's Comprehensive Education Plan. School goals are monitored regularly and accurately by the administrative cabinet, instructional team, and school leadership team. Adaptations to the curriculum and to the way in which lessons are planned are well understood by teachers.

A strong feature of the school is the good level of teamwork that has been established. Because of this, teachers are well motivated and eager to learn new strategies through well-planned professional development, through observing colleagues, or through the feedback given following observations. Throughout the school, students' behavior and self-confidence are well developed, and they demonstrate an eagerness to learn. This is because of the high expectations that are set and which are very well modeled by the principal. Students make good progress because they are well taught in lessons that are planned to meet their different needs. Parents feel welcomed in the school and are fully supportive of the degree to which their children are cared for and supported in their learning.

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 proficient.

The administrative team and faculty gather data from a variety of sources, which helps them in developing a clear picture of the current and past performance of students in grades and classes across the school. This good range of information enables the school to compare student performance between subjects, particularly in relation to English and mathematics. This is used well in providing clear information for class teachers at the start of each year which means that lessons are accurately planned to meet students' needs from the outset.

The school uses data well in tracking the rates of transition from one level to the next. This is well established in English language arts, as result of the school's focus on this area, and is developing well in mathematics. Internal assessments, in the form of conference notes and the analysis of performance in the different components of tests, are complemented by the good use of interim testing to measure students' performance and plan interventions where necessary. For example, the school has made good use of published and interim data to identify a downward trend in the performance of eighth grade students, particularly in English language arts, and has responded rapidly in planning ways to improve teaching and learning for this cohort.

While the school has begun to make use of data which illuminates the achievement of different groups of students such as English language learners, or special education students, it recognizes that more remains to be done to refine this aspect of its work. In a similar way, although the school is good at identifying any underperformance of its students as individuals, it has yet to fully establish systems whereby differences in performance of ethnic groups may be identified and interventions planned.

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 school has a well-established cycle for reviewing its effectiveness and, from this, establishing clear goals for improvement. These are set well within the format of the Comprehensive Education Plan and regularly involve all members of the school community. Information about student performance is effectively used in this process, although the school recognizes that it could use data in more detail to inform its planning. For example, while the cabinet, coaches and grade teams collaborate well in reviewing the progress made by students in determining areas for development, goals are primarily focused on the achievement of individual students, classes, and grade levels. This enables good support to be planned for students whose progress gives the greatest cause for concern. However, the school is aware of the potential benefits of looking even more closely at the performance of different groups, such as the wide range of ethnicities, in planning developments that are more precisely targeted to the needs of all students.

The school sets high expectations for its students, who are actively taught to value their work and achievements. They are aware of the goals that are set through the grade level strands of different subjects and regularly evaluate their own progress towards meeting these through, for example, evaluating assessments on-line. Parents are clear that the school keeps them well informed about their children’s progress and about areas which might be improved in order to achieve at the predicted rate. Because of this, parents are enabled to provide good support at home, which has a positive impact on their children’s learning.

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 administrative team and faculty have established a broad curriculum which, particularly in English language arts and mathematics, is well developed. The school uses data well in measuring the impact of the curriculum on students’ learning through end-of-study-unit and interim assessments, and pacing calendars. Decisions about the selection and continued use of additional resources, such as support materials used by the academic intervention team, are made following a careful review of their diagnostic potential. A variety of additional programs have been selected which are effective in meeting the needs of all students, specifically those who are English language learners and special education students.

The degree to which comparisons of students' performance are made across grades and subjects, and the work to develop greater differentiation in lessons has established teachers' sense of their own accountability. Teachers work hard to make lessons interesting and, as a result, students are actively involved in their learning. They are confident that their teachers respond well to both their academic and personal needs. Student attendance is a high priority for the school and the good range of systems that have been established are reinforced by rewards and incentives that motivate students well. A particularly strong feature is that students know they can call teachers about missed work or rely on "Homework Buddies" for that information, should they be unable to attend school for valid reasons.

The budget is well used so that classrooms are resourced with materials which have been well chosen to support students' learning across the curriculum. This is also reflected in the staffing decisions that have been taken in, for example, providing a very good range of skilled support and intervention staff, and in the way in which schedules are designed to maximize the time available for common planning and grade level conferencing.

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 has a clear vision for the school's development which, through monitoring, linked to carefully planned professional development, and clear communication, is shared by staff. He is well respected and has secured effective and efficient policies for the smooth running of the school. As a result, there is a good awareness throughout the school of the expectations that are set and of those aspects of its work that require improvement. High expectations are demonstrated in, for example, the use of data to develop a shared understanding of student achievement through grade and faculty meetings.

Staff are selected based on the contribution they are likely to make to school development goals and student achievement, while new teachers and those who may assume a leadership position are beginning to be trained in the use of data for evaluating and monitoring student performance. Professional development is effectively aligned with the school's data-driven goals, and its focus identified by an appropriate range of monitoring strategies including observations and comparative data analysis. The principal and assistant principals visit classrooms on a daily basis and use their observations to inform discussion as to the effectiveness of planned initiatives. Teachers value the feedback that is provided following regular formal observations.

Grade level conferences provide a good forum for teachers to share information about best practices, discuss the impact of changes to the curriculum, and arrange regular intervisitations. This reflects the well-established climate of trust and professionalism in which teachers are confident in evaluating their own and others' practice. A good range of well-established partnerships are in place that contribute well to student achievement, particularly in science. In a similar way, the links that have been established with support services ensure that the needs of students, particularly special education students, are well met.

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 well developed.

The school has made considerable progress in its ability to analyze its performance and to make good use of this information in planning for improvement. The success of this is reflected in the continuing trend of improvement that has been secured in student attainment since over time. Discussion, accurate monitoring and the review of improvements secured by professional development have enabled the school to establish a good understanding of the degree to which it has met its goals successfully by the end of each planning period. Student data is regularly evaluated so that, for example in English language arts, progress towards achievement targets can be followed and amendments made where necessary.

The priorities identified in the Comprehensive Education Plan are reviewed by the school leadership committee on a monthly basis. Although specific interim goals have not been introduced, the school makes good use of additional information from periodic assessments and individual student evaluations so that adjustments can be made to programs and the curriculum with agility and flexibility. At grade level conferences, for example, teachers compare the progress of students class by class and then discuss what next steps need to occur to accelerate student learning. The effectiveness of these modifications is reviewed at subsequent meetings. In this way, the school is able to track the progress that it is making towards reaching its goals, as well as identifying issues as they arise. Strategies, such as grouping students differently, adjusting the curriculum pacing chart, or re-teaching material that has not been adequately mastered are reviewed in relation to the changes in student performance that have been achieved.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Isaac Asimov School (PS/MS 99)	∅	✓	+
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