



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Arthur Ashe Junior Elementary**

**Public School 161**

**101 – 33 124th Street  
Queens  
NY 11419**

**Principal: Jill Hoder**

**Dates of review: December 11- 12, 2006**

**Reviewer: Kathleen Yates**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Arthur Ashe Junior School is an elementary school which serves an ethnically diverse population in Queens. It educates 840 students from pre-kindergarten to grade 6. The greatest proportion of children, 65%, come from Asian and Pacific Islander families. In addition 20% are Hispanic, 10% are Black, and 3% are White; with the remainder representing other backgrounds. Eleven per cent of students are English language learners. There is a much higher proportion of students coming into the school from other countries than is found in similar schools. Many return to their countries of origin during the course of the year, which affects the students' continuity of instruction. Many parents have a limited use of the English language which restricts their ability to help their children to improve.

The proportion of students who have special educational needs is 16%. The school is Title I eligible. Attendance, at around 93%, is in line with similar and City schools and there have been no principal or superintendent suspensions in the last year.

The Arthur Ashe School is the Magnet School of Global Studies through Multimedia and Technology and takes pride in offering students the opportunity to grow through various programs in the arts and technology. It is well equipped with a 21st century digital classroom and the school is used widely as the regional 'Technology Professional Development Center'.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal leads the school very effectively and is held in high esteem by all staff, students and parents.
- The school cares for all the students very well and celebrates their cultural diversity.
- The open and orderly school climate encourages students to want to do well, to respect each other and to behave well.
- Data on students' performance is analyzed rigorously so that teachers have a clear understanding of what it is students can do and what they need to do to improve.
- The constant focus on professional development is a major contribution to improvement in performance and progress.
- Teaching is engaging and of a consistently high quality so that all students respond well due to the high expectations of the staff.
- Enrichment activities and close connections with outside organizations provide students with good opportunities to develop life skills.
- There is well established teamwork and a close collaboration between all staff who contribute fully to decision making as a result of regular interpretation of data.
- The school is especially effective in meeting the social, emotional and academic needs of students with the greatest barriers to learning.
- Parents are regularly consulted and are actively involved in their children's learning.

### What the school needs to improve

- Plan for greater differentiation in lessons to ensure that higher achieving students make the progress of which they are capable.
- Further develop all teachers' knowledge and understanding of technology and make more use of it for teaching and learning in all subjects.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a well developed school.**

The school gives students an excellent start to their education. It provides a warm and welcoming environment and celebrates the diversity of all students, planning effectively for their academic, social and emotional needs. Parents are encouraged to be equal partners in their children's learning and are grateful for the opportunities that the school offers them.

The principal is a passionate advocate of professional development. This is the key feature of the school's success. The school also makes very good use of data which contributes to the rising performance and good progress made by the students.

A further distinctive feature of the Arthur Ashe School is that it is truly inclusive: It has taken the decision to allocate students to six collaborative team teaching classes and to place fifteen students with extreme needs in general classes. The school is a very harmonious environment and does an excellent job of promoting acceptance between general and special education.

The principal has been at the school for three years and is providing exemplary leadership and management for the school.

### 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 collects very detailed data on the performance and progress of each student, class and grade level. This applies to students from all ethnic groups, English language learners and those with special educational needs. Teachers make regular assessments in their classrooms to check on specific skills and these are quickly analyzed and used to guide instruction. The information gained from tests and teachers' own assessments provides an objective and constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student. Having gathered the wide range of data, the school examines it carefully and identifies the students' strengths and weaknesses in reading, writing and mathematics. The focus on developing teachers' skills in their use of conference notes and good communication strategies ensures consistency of practice across the school. The school's decisions when allocating resources and planning learning programs are well informed.

The principal and her cabinet carefully monitor students' overall performance and also ensure that the achievement of gender groups is analyzed too. The school measures and compares the performance and progress of students with that of similar schools in reading, English language arts, science, mathematics and social studies so that it has a clear picture of how well their students are doing both in the short term and in the longer term.

Review findings confirm the school's view that current achievement in all of these areas is good and that the use of data plays a prominent role in the achievement of students throughout the school.

**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.**

Professional development has brought a high level of expertise so that teachers are increasingly confident in their understanding of the need to consistently use the available data to understand each student's next learning step. The school has a rigorous approach to making use of goals and strategies. These focus on the development of the whole school including each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject and groups of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area. Targeted academic intervention strategies ensure that students with additional needs and those who have interruptions in their learning when they visit home countries are well supported. Students also benefit from after school academic and enrichment programs.

The school has high expectations of students and information as to their performance and how they might improve is shared regularly with them and their parents. Facilities such as the parent technology center and a parent lending library assist parents in increasing their own knowledge and encourage their involvement in their children's learning to help their children to improve. Staff consistently make good use of the assessment information gathered to set challenging goals and develop, evaluate and revise their plans. Rubrics are in place for all elements of the curriculum and are shared with students and their parents so that goals and expectations are clear. Students have a very good understanding of this process, for example, when they make first and then second drafts of their writing.

The school consults the community widely when important decisions are made. Those involved include the school leadership and professional development teams, the cabinet, the academic intervention support committee, the parents, parent coordinator and the student council so that decisions are made in the best interests of students. All are very well informed of the goals and plans for improving student performance and progress.

**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 school's curriculum is firmly based on high expectations of students' performance and review of their progress. Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan instruction carefully for students with special educational needs, including those with disabilities. They work exceptionally hard to help those who are

absent through visits to their homelands to catch up. On occasions there is a lack of differentiation built in to teachers' planning to meet the needs of higher attaining students so that they are not always challenged to achieve as well as they can.

Budgeting decisions ensure that all resources are wisely used to promote students' progress. The impact of the Columbia Teachers College reading/writing workshop program is apparent throughout the school. For example, leveled libraries and reading materials reflect the influence of the workshops to enhance students' enjoyment and the presentation of their work. All classrooms and public areas celebrate students' work so that the school is an exciting and stimulating environment in which to learn. Students really enjoy coming to school and instructional programs, including those for art, music and drama, actively engage students in lessons which ensure specific skills are taught in meaningful ways and learning is memorable. Both students and parents participate in solving mathematics challenges that prepare them well for everyday life skills, for example, of good budgetary management. Staffing and scheduling decisions are firmly based on documented student needs.

The school's emphasis on professional development has increased staff confidence in their use of a range of instructional strategies so that students can apply their learning well in test situations.

Teachers know and respect all their students and really enjoy their work in the school. This means that relationships between staff and students, and attitudes to learning and behavior are excellent. The school's efforts to promote good attendance and engagement are successful and parents are clear about the school's expectations for their children.

**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 school is justly recognized as a model school for professional development. It is successful in its goal to enrich its repertoire of professional skills and in its capacity to raise the bar on students' achievement.

A wide range of criteria are used when selecting new staff. These ensure that new faculty members have the capacity and commitment to work collaboratively and can fit in with the school's established procedures for improving students' performance and progress.

The professional development team conducts regular focused walkthroughs and thereby assesses and monitors the needs of staff and children. From their findings, decisions about professional development are made. For example the present focus is on the development of teachers' conferencing skills. Decisions also encompass the wishes of the staff and there is a constant drive to help all staff to use data to improve instructional practices and therefore student outcomes. Although a few teachers use technology to enhance the delivery of the curriculum, this is not an established practice and some staff do not yet have the expertise to use these important aids to facilitate learning.

Regular grade planning sessions are allocated and used effectively. These mean that staff work in teams to plan what, how and why they will teach the curricula according to identified student needs. They frequently evaluate their results and revise their planning accordingly. This level of collaboration and candid evaluation of their own and each other's instruction has helped to bring about improvements by the sharing of best

practices. Partnerships with outside bodies, staff developers and coaches ensure that specific groups of teachers across grades receive professional development in the modeling of lessons and they are also given frequent debriefings on the lessons delivered. This means that they are clear as to how they can improve their teaching to enhance student outcomes.

The principal is held in the highest regard by all members of the school community and students feel safe and well cared for. Daily routines are clearly understood and applied so that the school runs smoothly and students are provided with a calm and orderly environment which promotes the best conditions for positive attitudes to learning.

**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.**

This is a highly successful school that aims to become even more successful. Systems and structures for monitoring and evaluating the impact of its policies and procedures on each student's learning are well developed. The principal has an excellent understanding of what is happening in each classroom in each grade for each student. The Comprehensive Education Plan provides an effective framework for the school to evaluate its work through the year. To ensure this happens, there are regular meetings of the teams across the school including the school cabinet, professional development team, coaches, academic intervention services, parent partnerships and school leadership team. For example, regular case conferences demonstrate a high level of staff understanding of individual student progress. Professional collaboration and dialogue at these conferences ensures that predetermined structured programs are adjusted and modified in order to meet the needs of the students.

Discussions about students' assessments are highly focused and enable teachers to compare, evaluate and monitor the relative progress of students across classrooms and between grades. Administrators use all school data to check on student achievement and to amend the curricula as appropriate. As a result of weaknesses identified, teaching practices are rigorously reviewed; teachers evaluate their plans and specific interventions are implemented to improve expertise. Plans are adapted and practices altered in order to meet goals for accelerated learning. This process is a continuous cycle which ensures interim and final goals are modified when data demonstrates that revision is required. These processes ensure that all progress towards the whole school goals have agreed milestones and evaluative strategies.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: The Arthur Ashe Junior Elementary (PS 161)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>			<b>X</b>

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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"> <li>• each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>			<b>X</b>
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"> <li>• ethnic groups, English Language Learners, special education students*</li> </ul>			<b>X</b>
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"> <li>• all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>

\* 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.

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>

<b>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.</b>	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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X
<b>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.</b>	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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X
<b>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.</b>	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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X