



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Irwin Altman School

Middle School 172

**81-14 257 Street
Queens
NY 11004**

Principal: Jeffrey Slivko

Dates of review: November 28 - 30, 2006

Reviewer: Kenneth Grover

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

Irwin Altman School, Middle School 172, is a diverse grade 6 through 8 middle school, with high expectations for all students, located in the Floral Park section of Queens. The school's population of almost 1,100 students is approximately 22% White, 12% Black, 15% Hispanic, and 51% Asian. The majority of Asian students are from the Indian sub-continent. The overall population of the school has been declining over the past three years. This is attributed to the declining population in the feeder elementary schools and the phasing out of the ninth grade in the 2003-2004 school year. As the school population decreased, the number of Pakistani and Indian immigrants has increased, bringing the issue of mobility into the school community.

English language learners currently comprise 4% of the student population. Special education students constitute approximately 3% of the school's population and participate in both self contained and collaborative team teaching programs. The school's attendance rate is over 96%, which is above the rate for similar schools. The school does not receive Title 1 funding.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and staff analyze data to support student learning and placement in all academic and non-academic areas.
- The principal is dedicated, well-organized, highly efficient, visible, approachable, and communicates regularly with staff, students, and parents.
- Staff members are very caring, concerned, child-oriented individuals who constantly seek the best learning environments for all students.
- A very strong partnership exists between parents and staff that supports the school's efforts to raise achievement and provide enriched experiences for all students.
- The principal and assistant principals creatively use limited resources to support all components of the school program, with a focus on improvement of student achievement.
- Curriculum implementation is carefully planned and analyzed to ensure alignment with standards.
- All members of the school community have high expectations for all students.
- There is a strong emphasis on respect for the school's diverse population.
- The principal and staff have created a very positive learning environment and this is evident throughout the building.
- The school has established a very positive connection with after-school programs to provide a continuum of services for students.

What the school needs to improve

- Provide more professional development opportunities for staff to enhance their practice and broaden their knowledge.
- Utilize data to provide more differentiated instruction to better meet the needs of all students.
- Provide more common planning time for teachers so they can effectively structure their interactions with students.
- Establish a stronger connection between literacy and content-area instruction.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

At Irwin Altman School, the principal, assistant principals, teachers, and parents work collaboratively to support all aspects of all students' education. They have formed a strong partnership that provides both academic and non-academic support for students. Everyone has high expectations for the students and this is evident throughout the building. School successes are regularly celebrated at both school and parent coordinated events.

The principal provides efficient leadership, is constantly available and communicates regularly with the entire school community. The members of the cabinet work well together and strive to improve their leadership skills through professional development sessions focused on improving instruction. The leadership and staff are very concerned that all students are placed in an appropriate educational environment and resources are allocated to meet their needs. There is a continuum of services provided for students beginning with the regular school day program and continuing through to the extended day programs. Student support services are well coordinated and designed to meet the needs of the diverse student population.

There are strong formal and informal networks among staff to provide all students with the best possible services to meet their diverse needs. These networks have the support of the administrative team. The principal, assistant principals, and staff are aware of the areas of improvement and are beginning efforts to address them.

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 school uses a wide variety of data and assessments to provide teachers with a detailed understanding of how students are functioning and what needs to be done to improve their performance. The school, in its on-going efforts to utilize data, tracks student movement within levels and analyzes growth of all groups including ethnicity, English language learners and special education students. The principal and his team correlate student scores with classes and teachers to obtain the best match for the student and address the areas of deficiency and strength.

The school compares its performance with that of similar schools to ensure that its students are doing as well as they can. Partly as a result of the use of data to guide instruction, the school has shown growth in all areas over the past two years and exceeds achievement levels for similar schools. The school was named as a *High Performing/Gap Closing School* in June 2005. In addition, the number of students in Levels 3 and 4 in mathematics and English language arts increased by 12% or more between 2003 and 2005.

The school monitors data to ensure placement of students in appropriate academic settings. Interim assessments are analyzed and used to provide students with intervention services designed to meet a range of needs. These intervention services include students in Levels 1 and 2, in both mathematics and English language arts, and students needing support in Regents earth science. Student groupings are flexible, but more work is needed to further differentiate instruction within classrooms through greater utilization of data.

A toolkit for teachers is beginning to be developed that can be used to analyze data and create instructional settings designed to meet individual student needs. This includes downloading of data into Excel spreadsheets for more in-depth analysis of student performance. Portfolios are an integral part of the English language arts and mathematics programs.

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 principal and assistant principals set goals for the school based on their analysis and interpretation of data and alignment with the standards. These goals are communicated to teachers, students, parents, and other members of the school community. The school utilizes different forums, for example, sixth grade orientation, curriculum nights, and mathematics/literacy nights, to convey the school’s goals and constant emphasis on high expectations to students and parents. The goals form the basis for the school’s instructional practice and continuing professional development. Progress towards the goals is an on-going discussion at cabinet meetings, department and grade conferences, and faculty conferences. The constant areas of focus for the administrative team are the improvement of student achievement and instructional practice. Curriculum calendars have been developed in all content areas to guide instruction.

Teachers analyze data from multiple sources, including standardized tests and informal assessment, to develop their classrooms goals. These goals are aligned with the school’s goals and the standards to ensure that all students are receiving instruction that best meets their needs. Student progress is carefully monitored and communicated to parents, through report cards and interim progress reports. Intervention services are provided for students to assist them in areas of need/deficiency.

The school has both a strong formal and informal network designed to monitor and analyze student performance. Teachers and administrators regularly communicate with one another about students and what needs to be done to ensure their success. The student support team is a cohesive group of professionals who work well with the staff to properly place students in appropriate educational settings.

Parents play a dynamic part in the education of their children. They are active participants in all aspects of the school’s program, including providing financial support for many initiatives. The school utilizes an interim progress report that is sent out to parents between marking periods. This report informs parents about student progress in all content areas. It also informs staff if students are grouped properly and what services they need to improve their performance. The parent coordinator is a positive presence in the building and helps link all members of the school community together.

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 proficient.

The school successfully implements the mandated curriculum in all areas and ensures its alignment with the standards and school goals. The English language arts and mathematics curricula are supplemented, utilizing teacher knowledge, expertise, and outside resources, to provide students with enhanced instructional practice. In addition to providing instruction in English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, the school provides additional opportunities in such areas as music, art, and debate through its talented and gifted after-school program. The school's resources are used primarily to support the instructional program. Additional support for academic and non-academic programs comes from the parents. The school has also utilized outside funding to develop classroom libraries, congruent with the curriculum.

Students function well in the very responsive atmosphere that has been created by teachers and the administrative team and enjoy coming to school. One student noted, "I like getting up on Monday morning and coming to school." Students are actively engaged throughout the school day, with constant support and supervision from staff and administration. Attendance is well above average compared with similar and City schools. The principal scrutinizes attendance on a daily basis to ensure the school meets its goal.

Teachers are held accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. The placement of students in an appropriate educational setting is of paramount importance to all staff members. The school works very diligently to match students' and teachers' needs through appropriate staffing and scheduling decisions. The school is working to provide teachers with more common planning time to support their efforts for students and themselves.

Student progress is constantly being analyzed to ensure proper placement. Changes occur, in consultation with parents, when students' needs are not being met. The principal and assistant principals actively supervise the instructional program to make sure that teachers are utilizing data, formal and informal assessments, and the curriculum calendars to more successfully individualize instruction. Progress has been made in this area and continues to be a school-wide focus. The assistant principals and principal work well together to build teachers' understanding and capacity about how to implement differentiated instruction in all classrooms.

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 proficient.

The school has a strong, capable, concerned, and efficient administration that works well together and with the entire staff. The principal is highly efficient and respected by staff, students and parents. The school runs smoothly and there is a good organizational structure in place. Everyone understands their role and its relationship to the entire organization. The tremendous concern for students and families is evident in all that takes place in the school. Everyone has high expectations and understands the importance of providing students with an education that will begin to prepare them for future life

experiences. New staff members are carefully selected to make sure that, in addition to being exceptional educators, they fit in with school staff. The principal, assistant principals, and staff review resumes and evaluate demonstration lessons to be sure candidates are willing to learn and contribute to the school community. Thus far, they have been successful in hiring new staff who meet the criteria.

Professional development is closely aligned with improving instruction and student achievement. Most of the professional development work occurs during department meetings. Additional professional development at interdepartmental meetings is needed to establish a stronger connection between literacy and content area instruction. Members of the senior leadership team conduct professional development sessions throughout the school year, based on a clear understanding of the needs of staff. Some additional professional development is required to ensure that teachers develop their skills and increase their knowledge across the curriculum. All members of the administrative team visit classrooms daily, with assistant principals conducting most of the classroom observations. The observations are another tool used to improve instruction and inform professional development. The required formal observations also take place, with more formal feedback.

Classrooms are positive learning environments where teachers make productive connections with students. They are also places where teachers gather to support one another and develop their skills and enhance their knowledge. The school has a good range of effective partnerships with community-based organizations which support students' academic and personal development.

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.

This is a school with a sound focus on improving achievement for all students. Communication between all constituencies is on-going, informational, and celebratory. The school's goals are tied to improving student achievement and instructional practice and are aligned with the standards. The Comprehensive Education Plan establishes the school's priorities and functions as the foundation for its work. Progress towards goals is regularly reviewed.

The school utilizes a variety of ways to assess student progress and teacher performance. In addition to reviewing formal and informal test data and observing classrooms, assistant principals look at progress across grade levels and content areas to evaluate and respond to student progress and determine teachers' strengths and needs. Staff members meet at department and student support team meetings to revise plans for students and provide appropriate intervention services when and where needed.

Through continuous analysis of different types of data, the school is able to realign its resources to support the needs of students and staff. As always, the constant is the improvement of student achievement and instructional practice. The school works diligently to accelerate the learning for all students and has been successful in moving students from Levels 1 and 2.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Irwin Altman School (MS 172)	∅	✓	+
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	