



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Albert Einstein School

Intermediate School 131

**885 Bolton Avenue
Bronx
NY 10473**

Principal: Rudolph Rupnarain

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Reviewer: Graham Preston

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

Albert Einstein School serves nearly 1200 students in grades 5 through 8, divided into four academies. The population is approximately 54% Hispanic and 43% Black, with a small number of students from other groups. Only approximately 3% of students are English language learners. Around 14% are special education students, about half of whom are in self-contained classrooms, although this proportion reduces as more students are steadily integrated into general education over the four years. Over 80% of students are Title 1 eligible, about in line with similar schools and well above the City average. Attendance, at 91.4% in 2005, is above that of similar schools and comparable to the City average.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The academy structure has considerably simplified the management of a large intermediate school, with the principal and academy heads working effectively as a team.
- The academy structure has, in turn, created cohesive teams of teachers, supported by counselors and coaches, who share a common focus and work collaboratively.
- In addition to the common core curriculum, the academy system provides different curriculum pathways which meet students' interests and needs.
- The school makes effective use of data to monitor student progress both individually and as groups.
- Attendance rates at 93% are at least as good as the City average and considerably better than similar schools.
- The school makes considerable use of its links with science, arts, business and media organizations to provide interesting and enriching academic programs.
- Students are positive about school and behavior has significantly improved in the last two years.
- Special education students are increasingly being integrated into the general education programs and this helps them to make better progress towards the grade standards.
- The provision of an accelerated learning group in each academy is enabling the more academic students to reach higher standards.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop an assessment system which allows the school to need to better demonstrate students' incremental gains and extend assessment to the wider curriculum such as the arts.
- Improve the consistency of the use of data to plan differentiated learning to meet the needs of students more accurately.
- Continue efforts and develop further strategies to increase parental partnerships both in their children's education and in the development of the school.
- Devise a summary of the school's improvement plan, with measurable interim goals and timescales, and use it to involve more staff to help it to meet its goals.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school with well-developed features.

Albert Einstein is a developing school that has a number of areas of good practice although this has yet to impact significantly on student achievement. The school is well managed and organized to provide a safe and increasingly effective learning environment in each of its four academies. These provide a number of smaller and supportive learning environments that help students make better progress. The principal has high aspirations for his school and he works closely with the academy heads to drive school improvement.

The cabinet works closely with other staff to provide an attractive curriculum that engages students' interest. There is clear evidence that student attitudes and behavior are now generally good and attendance is much better than in previous years. Although recent State examination results show little change, current progress in mathematics is better and students are developing greater confidence and skills in other curriculum areas such as science, social studies and the arts. The school is further developing its assessment and monitoring procedures to give a more detailed picture of these improvements.

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 is well aware of similar school and City school comparisons and monitors its performance regularly. It gathers its own data from regular progress reviews, records, and tests, as well as other measures such as the Princeton Review assessments in mathematics and English language arts. It also keeps detailed attendance records and shares class by-class performance with students on a daily basis.

Special education students' progress is also carefully monitored as part of the school's drive to bring them into the general education program. The existence of three parallel academy groups is providing a good opportunity to compare and evaluate student performance in the different subjects, and against each other. The school also looks at the data relating to the other groups represented in the school, to compare their performance against one another, and to ensure that all groups of students are benefiting from what the school has to offer. Performance is evaluated over time to observe trends and use results to modify instruction as necessary, and the school also tracks each cohort of students, to ensure that expectations are high enough and that sufficient progress is made.

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 with well-developed features.

Since the successful reorganization of the school into academies, the cabinet has been working closely to review data and establish clear goals and school direction. The school is currently sensitive to the need to meet its goal of hitting the State target for special education students and proposals for changes in instruction are based on careful evaluation of those students’ personal and academic progress.

The school is very aware of each student’s performance, and carefully identifies students who have the potential to reach level 3 (‘pushables’) and those who have done so but may easily fall back (‘slippables’). These students are then given additional attention to ensure that they reach or maintain their level 3 achievement. In addition, the school provides well for those students who need most support, with a wide range of intervention programs to improve the progress of identified students. Although the extended day program is working effectively, the school recognizes the need to create more links between the day program and after-school programs to facilitate continuity between the two areas.

The school involves students through the student government and breakfast meetings with the principal. Parent teacher conferences are held regularly and parents are provided with a prompt sheet to help them to understand their children’s reports. Despite considerable effort the school has not yet succeeded in increasing parents’ participation in their children’s education. For example, workshops for parents to support them in helping their children at home are not as well attended as the school would like.

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.

Students pass through a 5th grade academy where they settle in, consolidate their learning, and develop new knowledge and skills. Through ‘taster’ programs they are able to select one of three academies that specialize in science and technology, leadership, or the arts. Guidance counselors help students follow their interests, and this may help to explain improved attendance and what leaders see as increased engagement in learning.

The school monitors instruction carefully and ensures that the core subjects are well covered in all academies, but it is the wider curriculum that is a particularly positive feature. Students in the arts academy are exposed to the creative and performing arts, particularly through the school’s partnership with the Lincoln Center. Science and technology students experience more practical and investigative work in science and design work in an architecture project. Leadership students benefit from community work and other activities that give responsibility and develop them as individuals. The organization and presentation of some of this work through cable television promotes learning and enhances instruction.

School leaders cite these programs as being largely responsible for improved attendance. As a result of this interesting curriculum, attendance rates are much improved. The school

continues to monitor attendance carefully and has developed an incentive system that identifies which academy has the best attendance on any given day.

Teams of teachers work closely to develop effective instructional programs in each academy, trying varying approaches and differentiated learning resources to meet the widely different student needs. However, the use of performance data to plan for differentiated learning is not yet consistent practice. The school has created a “gifted” class at each grade level. Students in the eighth grade class successfully complete high school Regents credits. Some existing programs, including professionally produced materials, do not have a clear learning purpose or are not sufficiently challenging. The school is therefore considering the need to develop more challenging learning opportunities through a progressive instructional program across all years with the possibility of more homogeneous groupings. The school uses its budget appropriately to develop the wider for a wider curriculum.

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 with well-developed features.

The school has lost a considerable number of well qualified and experienced teachers in recent years and there are some vacancies. However, with its growing reputation as an effective school, staff turnover has been considerably reduced. If staff turnover initially slowed improvement, this is now being increasingly compensated by many younger staff who are working closely with experienced practitioners to develop new instructional programs that show a fresh perspective and innovation.

Although some professional development has been curtailed because of the changes in the teachers’ contract, the use of class observation to develop and support new and less well-experienced or proficient staff is a positive feature of the school. The cabinet carry out frequent observations that clearly focus on ensuring lessons have clear purpose and variety. The English language arts and mathematics coaches are actively involved in this through their membership in each academy team. A further strength has been the creation of subject leaders for other subject areas. These play an important part in carrying out observations of colleagues in order to improve teaching in those subjects.

Support services are appropriately used to promote student learning. Counselors work closely with teachers through their membership in academy teams and are therefore able to deal promptly with any concerns. The school has effective systems to identify students needing additional learning support and the family worker helps sustain the school’s good attendance rate. A positive feature, mentioned above, is the increasing use of links with outside bodies such as the Lincoln Center Institute, YMCA, IBM and the Salvadori Center to enrich instruction and help students achieve their academic goals.

Each academy is effectively led and managed by the assistant principals who serve as academy heads and work closely with the principal, who coordinates whole-school systems and effectively promotes school improvement.

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 school's Comprehensive Education Plan is thorough. However, it does not have a summary document with measurable and achievable objectives showing allocated responsibilities, timescales, and budget costs. As a result, there is not always clarity about how initiatives and improvement can be monitored and evaluated, nor how well staff can contribute to the school's goals and plans. This is an area for development recognized by the principal and his cabinet.

Nonetheless, in their strong drive for improvement school leaders use a good range of monitoring tools to evaluate progress. They regularly monitor and record students' progress through detailed interim progress reports that clearly indicate improvement or lack of it, and adapt programs and instruction in response.

With three parallel sixth to eighth grade cohorts, the school is beginning to make comparisons of student progress, for example in mathematics, and to explore reasons for any variations and plan future action accordingly. The school has identified the need for re-developing assessment tools that can easily be interpreted to support teachers' planning for individuals and groups. This also needs to recognize incremental gains made within grade levels and ensure that students' achievements in the wider curriculum can also be tracked.

In summary, the school, through its monitoring of student progress and careful evaluation of the curriculum and staff development, has a clear overall picture of its effectiveness. Its readiness to consider and adopt new approaches is one of its strengths.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME Albert Einstein School (IS 131)	∅	✓	+
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	