



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Isaac Bildersee Intermediate School**

**Middle School 068  
956 East 82<sup>nd</sup> Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11236**

**Principal: Alex Fralin**

**Dates of review: October 4 - 9, 2007  
Lead Reviewer: Roger Fry**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Isaac Bildersee is a middle school with 1158 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 92% Black, 5% Hispanic, 2% White and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 16% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 90%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 60% eligibility.

The school is divided into three academies which are global studies, urban studies and entrepreneurship and law.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- There is a strong commitment throughout the school to provide the best for students.
- The principal's and assistant principals' vision, positive attitudes and strong leadership help move the school forward.
- The student tracking system and checks on students' academic gains have accelerated student progress.
- The school uses data effectively to identify students' individual needs and to support a modified curriculum for those who need it.
- The school makes good use of the talents of staff by involving them in collaborative discussions and decision making about testing and diagnosing students' needs.
- Small group instruction meets the needs of special education students and English language learners well.
- There are strong partnerships with industry and commerce that support the work of the three academies effectively.
- Strong procedures promote high attendance.
- Students feel valued and respected in the school environment.

### What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen the use of assessment data to ensure that teachers use differentiated tasks, well matched to student performance in lessons.
- Ensure staff receive written guidance on how to use the new student tracking system successfully.
- Build in interim student goals to keep an accurate check on students' progress.
- Help students structure their academic goals, so that they know clearly what they need to do to improve their work.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is proficient.**

Isaac Bildersee Intermediate School continues to improve. The principal and assistant principals have provided the drive in the last year to ensure that the school is well placed to help students do better. The school provides a safe environment where students feel valued and respected. This quality puts students at ease and allows them to make improving progress. The three academies allow students to follow their interests effectively. Links with industry and commerce are a strength and give a greater purpose to students' work.

There are high expectations for everyone to meet. The school continues to make significant strides forward. This progress is reflected in improved student outcomes in math over the last year. The school has developed, since the last Quality Review, good data systems to keep a check on the progress of special education students and English language learners. These students feel they have their part to play in school life and make steady academic progress. Teachers plan collaboratively and this ensures that many lessons are interesting. As a result, students often respond to school with enthusiasm.

The principal and senior staff know what needs to be done to move the school forward. The inquiry team has begun work on improving staff understanding of the latest student test data. This work is at an early stage, but the school is well placed to accelerate students' progress further through this means because of the good structure for training staff. Differentiated activities in lessons, better student progress checks and ensuring students know clearly what their next small steps in learning are areas for improvement.

### 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 the student's progress over time.**

#### **This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The school has put together a comprehensive student performance database using information technology. It contains the hard data about every student, including their performances in state tests and attendance records. It lists the extra programs that students attend. The school has made good progress with this initiative in response to the previous review. The school is now in a better position to examine the performance of every student. Teachers can already see how well groups of students, such as those who are English language learners are performing. Teachers also now have the tools to look at the performances of boys and girls, ethnic groups, the grades and academies in greater detail. Previously existing arrangements for tracking the performances of special

education students remain effective. So are the tracking arrangements for English language learners. Their steady progress over time in small groups is the proof.

A new system has just been put into place to track the progress of students between state tests. The source of this additional data is tests that teachers use regularly to find out what students know, understand and can do in lessons. The school has a clear plan to roll out this system across the school. At present the school does not have a consistent system for setting interim goals for students to reach, so that it can keep an accurate check on student progress between state tests.

The school administration is acutely aware of the performance of other schools. It has considered last year's progress report card from the City. The administration knows what it must do to improve the school's performance further at an individual student level. The inquiry team has begun work on becoming familiar with the student tracking system and finding high and low achievement amongst students. While this knowledge has yet to be spread through the entire staff, good plans are in place to do this. The school does not have written guidance for teachers about how to use the database quickly and successfully to understand the past performance of students within classrooms, grades and subject areas.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The school uses monthly implementation plans successfully to guide its work. This system maintains a good focus on reaching interim whole school goals and on the consequent staff development program. This aspect of the school's work continues to be well developed. The overall targets for the school are realistic but challenging. Last year, for example, there was an improvement in student math achievement across the school. Parents confirmed that the school has improved over the last three years and that their children are making better progress.

Intervention plans for students in greatest need are carefully considered by staff, based on thorough diagnoses of their needs. The new student tracking system is already helping school leaders and teachers to identify students' next steps in learning more easily. Initially, for students who are working at Levels 1 and 2, the school has initiated a good "personal academic intervention plan" system to supplement the existing systems. This form gathers together all the data that is needed to make informed decisions about future programs for these students. This year, the teachers are targeting five lower performing students in each class, to focus on accelerating their progress. This is a positive initiative. It is intended to allow the school, as students are added to the program, to reach its overall academic performance targets for next year.

Students and parents report positively about the dialogue and conversations they have with the teachers. Parents know how well their children are performing. Student goals are shared, some of which are aspirational, such as what students want to be in the future. Students are less clear about their academic goals. They do not have an organized list of small steps in their learning that they are working towards to improve their English and math work. This slows their progress.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.**

**This area of the school’s work is proficient.**

In the three academies students have an opportunity to study a range of interesting subjects such as entrepreneurship or global studies. This choice increases the interest that students have in their work and is a strong feature. Students in each of the three academies have close contact with a small number of teachers. The arrangement means that students are well known to their teachers and helps them to make better progress. Teachers are well aware that good behavior does not always mean good engagement with lessons. Hence the school has a program of electives and an enrichment program. The school has made some good budgeting decisions. In order to develop the curriculum further, grant money from the city councilman, has been spent wisely on a modern well-equipped library and computer lab. Attendance is higher than in most intermediate schools, which is a sign that students enjoy coming to school.

Teachers use the available data to place students in groups of similar performance levels for subjects, such as in English language arts and math. Students complete similar work in the classes and have made steady progress under this arrangement. Yet, within this arrangement of classes there is a range of achievement level, which is not explored fully through the use of student progress data. As a result, teachers do not consistently differentiate instruction within the classes, which slows student learning and progress.

The leadership is active, ensuring movement around school is calm. The principal and his assistants are often in corridors, greeting students and making sure that they are where they should be. The group of students that offered their thoughts and ideas during the review has now been formed into an advisory group. In this way they have the opportunity to make the changes that they identified.

**Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

**This area of the school’s work is well developed.**

The good features identified at the time of the last review continue to be strengths. There is a strong sense of a professional learning community. Meetings between teachers always contain an element of good news and acknowledgement of what has gone well. The school has a good process for developing the professional skills of teachers. They have begun to learn how to use the new student tracking system.

The principal and assistant principals regularly visit classrooms. The principal uses “drive bys” as a way of dipping into what is happening across classes. He gives, on occasions, helpful instant written feedback to teachers about what he has seen. The senior staff have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and give constructive advice.

Teachers new to the job receive good support. They meet regularly to share experiences and good ideas about how to teach better. The two coaches also make very useful suggestions to help inexperienced teachers solve issues. This is a strength of the school’s work. Faculty meetings within grades show how well teachers work together. Issues

about homework were discussed in one meeting. Many good suggestions were made to improve how this important element of students' work should be organized.

Links with commerce and industry are a strength. The three academies have all developed relevant links to other organizations. Representatives go to the school and talk to students about what a job in those organizations might entail. The curriculum is enriched by this approach and accelerates student understanding of the workplace.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

There is a strong commitment to do the best for students and a clear vision from the administration. The school has a realistic view of its strength and weaknesses. The monthly implementation plans have clear measurable goals and the school knows when it has met them. The school takes its work of self-evaluation, linked to accelerating student progress, very seriously. For example, decisions about how to improve students' outcomes are displayed on sheets on the walls of the principal's office. The school makes good use of teachers' talents. There are several committees of teachers that consider how to improve different aspects of the school's work.

The school analyzes carefully whether students' annual yearly achievement targets have been reached. The new student tracking system is helping teachers do this job better. Diagnostic testing continues to reveal whether special education students or English language learners are succeeding or not. Teachers have just begun to use the academic gains reports from the new tracking system as a tool to accelerate student progress. Teachers have also begun to evaluate the short tests that they are giving in between the state tests. Teachers look for strengths and weaknesses in the way that students have answered questions. They use this information to guide their teaching and so improve student progress. As yet, students do not have interim targets to meet between state tests. Much of what is in place has yet to have a significant and major effect on student outcomes.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Intermediate School (IS 068)</b>	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>			X		

### Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?			X		
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?			X		
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?			X		
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?			X		
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?		X			
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?			X		
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?			X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			X		

### Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?			X		
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?			X		
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?			X		
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?		X			
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?			X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			X		

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.**

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?			X		
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?			X		
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?			X		
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?		X			
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?			X		
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?			X		
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X		

**Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?			X		
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other's classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another's instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?			X		
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>				X	

**Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school's plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.2 the school's plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?			X		
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?			X		
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to make strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?			X		
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan's interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X		