



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Isaac Remsen School

Elementary School 147

**325 Bushwick Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11206**

Principal: Rafaela Espinal- Pacheco

Dates of review: January 14 - 15, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Cheryl Baker

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

Progress made since the last review
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

The Isaac Remsen School is an elementary school with 296 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 42% Black, 57% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 91%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 100% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school provides clear and informed leadership for implementing the curriculum that has resulted in improved student achievement.
- Teachers receive good levels of support from administrators, coaches and consultants as they learn new instructional approaches.
- The school has made strategic scheduling decisions that accommodate the time necessary for professional development and supplemental instruction.
- Clear policies, practices and incentives are continuing to improve student attendance.
- The school has high expectations for student achievement and communicates this to students and parents effectively.
- The school uses all available data well to understand students' academic and personal needs.
- Grade level, classroom and academic planning are informed by the analysis of ongoing assessments.
- Grade level and cross grade collaboration serves to ensure curricular alignment, instill common instructional approaches and reinforce ownership of school-wide assessment results.
- Students enjoy their school, their learning and their teachers.
- Parents appreciate the programs offered to them and are especially appreciative of the detailed and frequent reporting of student progress that the school provides.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen school-wide plans by identifying short-term benchmarks to measure progress towards goals that are communicated to all constituencies.
- Continue to provide professional development to sharpen differentiated instruction and the use of instructional technology.
- Continue to explore supplemental programs and practices to extend challenge for high achieving students.
- Devise mechanisms to enlist greater parent input to teachers and others regarding the learning needs and strengths of their children.

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 well developed.

The school benefits from strong instructional leadership and is improving student achievement. Administrators and teachers use data well to understand student progress and to set plans for instruction and effective interventions. Good grade level and classroom goal setting and planning do not include reference to school-wide plans that are then shared widely. The entire school keenly focuses on the progress of students and uses regular measures of student learning to gauge the effectiveness of plans, making revisions as necessary. The curricular and extracurricular program is broad and engaging with good extensions in the arts. The school is exploring additional avenues to increase challenge for the students and, especially, its high achieving students.

High expectations for teaching are supported through effective professional development and, increasingly, instruction incorporates components of balanced literacy. The school plans to continue its good training practices that effectively address teachers' needs and are building continuity across and among grades. Students are happy at school and parents are strong supporters of the principal who has made noticeable improvements in teaching and learning. The school is well organized. Effective practices have increased attendance and decreased behavior problems.

The school has made the improvements cited in the previous Quality Review, to good effect. The inquiry team is well structured and is making good progress towards a deeper understanding of its target group.

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 well developed.

Teachers and administrators make very effective use an extensive variety of assessment methods to identify and monitor student learning. Regularly updated information on each child is collated, analyzed and represented graphically so that administrators and teachers have sharp and effective evidence of the progress of each classroom, grade level and academic subject. This good management system is reflective of the effective training provided to staff so that they can make efficient use of the data revealed, especially, through periodic and diagnostic assessments.

The school effectively monitors the performance and progress of special education students and English language learners through the stipulations of their individual education plans and mandated testing. Increasingly, these students are educated in co-taught general education classes and are making good progress academically and socially. The school further disaggregates student achievement data to provide good updated understanding of the performance of gender groups, ethnicities and ability groups. Personnel analyze differences with care and take appropriate steps to address disparities such as, for example, recognizing the need to plan for motivating the highest achieving students to learn even more. The school uses technology effectively to communicate progress of students, classrooms and grades to teachers at grade meetings, thus increasing whole-school focus on progress and motivating all to increase student achievement. The school is, rightly, proud of the good progress it has made under the current administration and notes its improved reputation for achievement and climate among neighboring schools.

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 well developed.

The school engages on collaborative processes to set clear goals for improvement through “June planning”, grade level meetings and with the school leadership team. The school has posted overarching goals throughout the school, effectively communicating these to teachers. However, these school-wide goals are not explicitly supported by short-term measures of success to help gauge incremental progress nor are they widely publicized among the school community at large. Instructional goal setting is well organized and tightly tied to student achievement data. For instance, monthly goals agreed at “June planning” guide unit planning at grade level that specifies daily instruction. Plans are effectively modified as warranted. Effective plans for students most at risk are closely monitored by specialists or by teachers conducting interventions. Students are well supported through a seamless menu of academic intervention services that provide opportunities for remediation and enrichment.

The school has high expectations for student achievement and communicates these to students and parents through its mission. Handbooks effectively set forth expectations for learning and student achievement is recognized. Parents receive good communication from the school regarding events, programs and, especially, student progress. The school has extended its reporting from three marking periods to five and redesigned its report cards to provide detailed information about student progress. These have resulted in much greater understanding among students and parents about what students know and are able to do, and where they need to improve. The school also provides informative workshops for parents to help them help their children to succeed. To support learning further, the school is working to increase avenues for parents to provide information to teachers and others about their child’s learning needs and strengths.

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 well developed.

The school’s core curriculum provides meaningful interim data about student progress through embedded assessments such as conferring notes, running records and periodic testing. Assessment calendars serve as pacing guides and cross-grade team meetings serve to align practices among and between grades effectively. Strong programs in the arts, science, social studies and physical education broaden and enrich the curriculum, as do field trips. The school looks forward to the impending opening of its new library as an enriching resource. The school has explicit expectations for teachers’ instruction and administrators routinely collect record books, reading and writing levels, and student work samples to ascertain students’ progress. This results in instruction that is generally engaging and teachers are gaining skills in inclusion of special education students and English language learners. However, differentiated instruction is largely by activity rather than through planning for the individual learning needs of each student, although the school is making progress in this direction. As a result, teachers miss some opportunities to help students, particularly higher achieving students, to achieve even more. Instructional technology is not used widely as some teachers need training in its use. Classrooms are bright, well structured for learning and display examples of student work.

Students and teachers demonstrate caring and respectful relationships and all adults share a deep commitment to foster students’ academic, social, emotional and personal growth. Student attendance has increased under the current administration due to clear expectations and diligent attention. Incentives have also influenced attendance which currently stands at 92%, above that of similar schools across the City.

The principal is astute in making staffing, scheduling and budgetary decisions based on her understanding of the needs of students and staff. For example, on-going needs for professional development are accommodated through strategic scheduling that has created weekly meeting time for teachers, which is increasing their skills. Substitute teachers are hired periodically to release teachers for data analysis to good effect. The principal has hired additional staff to reduce class sizes and effectively increase attention to all students needs.

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 principal, assistant principal, coaches and consultants make frequent formal and informal observations of teaching that provide good assistance to teachers as they deepen their teaching repertoires. The school’s extensive and effective professional development program provides differentiated support to teachers in developing their skills and knowledge and is directly linked to trends identified through data analysis. Teachers frequently meet in grade- and cross-grade teams to share practices and plan instruction. This good collaboration is supplemented by intervisitations where teachers

effectively demonstrate skills to one another, such as a recent focus on 'accountable talk'. Teachers new to the school or the profession receive strong support from coaches and fellow teachers as well as network specialists, when appropriate. They receive extra attention necessary to build their instructional skills rapidly.

The school has well defined procedures and policies that are clearly set forth in teacher, student and parent handbooks that effectively address all aspects of schooling. Classroom procedures are effective in providing the conditions necessary for learning and students are well behaved and focused on their lessons. Ample guidance and student support personnel, who provide a number of effective interventions, ensure the students' social and emotional wellbeing. The school has created specialized settings to support therapies within the context of the school day. Additionally, the school enjoys good support from civic, cultural, business and athletic organizations that effectively support students' academic and personal growth through tutoring, after school enrichment, theatrical productions and field trips.

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 well developed.

The school is practiced in developing plans for improving student outcomes at the classroom and grade level. These include suitable timeframes and incremental measures of success. The school also has established school-wide goals that effectively communicate the leadership's vision for its future development. However, generally, these are not explicitly supported by the school's planning and goal setting practices, which is otherwise effective. Teachers make effective use of periodic and diagnostic assessments to measure the progress of all students as well as those in key areas, such as special education and English language learners. Additionally, on-going classroom assessments impact the fluid grouping and re-grouping of students for instruction and intervention. The results of whole-class assessments are collated and used to guide effective planning for subsequent units of study.

School leaders routinely track planning outcomes to monitor student learning and teacher effectiveness, providing deft assistance when necessary. The school's highly personalized teacher supervision is tied to student data and serves to focus staff on results, to good effect. The school's data inquiry team is effectively using in-house assessments and other periodic indicators to determine root causes for the slow progress of some students. Administrators use weekly cabinet meetings to review data and make shrewd, effective strategic decisions regarding next steps for professional development, instructional interventions and other actions necessary to move student achievement forward.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Isaac Remsen School	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
Quality Score				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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				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		
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4				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 makes 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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X	