



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Academy of Instructional Technology

Middle School 534

**787 Lafayette Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11221**

Principal: William Cooper

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Lead Reviewer: Barry King

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Academy of Instructional Leadership is a middle school with 235 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 77% Black, 20% Hispanic and 2% American Indian students, with 1% from other backgrounds. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 23% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 86.0%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 73% eligibility.

The school was created in September 2006. It occupies the top floor of what was previously a kindergarten through grade 8 school. The younger grades are accommodated beneath it. Approximately one-third of the students have been held over.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a clear vision for the future of the school that is steadily improving the quality of education.
- The staff have good opportunities to share and develop their professional thinking with each other, which has created a strong sense of teamwork.
- Basic teaching routines are applied consistently and some lessons are purposeful and well paced.
- The school generates data on students from a wide range of sources and analyzes it well to gauge their progress, individually and in groups.
- Projected goals for each class and grade are based upon students' past performance and clearly posted in corridors.
- The core curriculum is well organized, with rubrics displayed so that students know how to improve their work.
- The inquiry team is generating helpful ideas on how to improve the rigor of instruction.

What the school needs to improve

- Broaden the curriculum to increase the interest and motivation of the students.
- Enforce agreed procedures to ensure that students are well behaved and engaged in all classrooms.
- Differentiate work in class so that all students are suitably challenged.
- Agree interim and longer-term goals for students that are measurable and allow their rates of progress to be gauged.
- Enlist the support of more parents in support of their children's education.

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.

The well-respected principal has taken important steps to strengthen the capacity of the school to continue improving. He has built up the staff's morale and given them opportunities to work in teams. This was one of the issues raised at the time of the previous Quality Review and the school now provides well for common planning time and intervisitations between classes, and has supported teachers through well-judged priorities for professional development.

The school has made good progress in organizing its core curriculum, which is now well established with pacing calendars for each marking period and the posting of rubrics in most classrooms. It has done less to broaden the curriculum. The extra-curricular program is narrow and the main school curriculum currently lacks art or the range of courses that might be expected of a school specializing in technology. The school has plans to deal with these gaps, and is purchasing substantial amounts of hardware to help it extend what it offers. The school has made some progress in goal setting. It posts clear goals on school walls for raising achievement for each class and grade. It sets students interim goals for improving their learning. It does not set measurable goals for each student over the longer term, or interim goals that would act as benchmarks for progress towards them.

The school has made some progress in improving instruction. Basic procedures such as the setting of lesson objectives are in place. Some classrooms have a good learning environment, and lessons proceed purposefully and at a brisk pace with students enjoying what they are doing. In a minority of classrooms, basic behavioral routines are not enforced and students become noisy. Despite this, the overall tone of the school has improved and students are responding well to the incentives the school provides to motivate them. The staff are aware of the importance of matching work more closely to student capabilities but in many cases have not implemented strategies to secure this.

The school now has well developed arrangements for generating data to track students' progress and analyze their performance. The inquiry team is well focused in its research. The school has good channels of communication with parents and some work hard to support it, but many parents are not co-operating closely enough with staff as a way of supporting their children's education.

The improvements to the school have resulted in better attitudes in many students and some small gains in State test scores. It has not yet made the breakthrough in increasing by a significant proportion the students who achieve the expected levels.

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.

The school has made good progress in gathering and analyzing data over the past year. It now has systems that give it a good overview of student progress. It uses the results of the New York State tests and outcomes from Acuity and other testing systems, such as Scantron, to plot the performance of each student. For special education students, it uses extra tests such as those derived from the Wilson program. Just as important, the teachers gather data from their own tests and quizzes to accumulate a good profile of student competence by the end of each of the four marking periods. The school collates its data well. For example, test outcomes by ethnic group and gender are well presented in bar charts, so that it is possible to see at a glance the comparative performance of each group. The school is thus clearly aware of differential performance, for example between girls and boys, but it has not yet thoroughly investigated the causes. The achievement of students over time is equally clearly charted and every six weeks the school examines the overall performance of each one. The performance of similar schools is examined by pulling their progress reports off the City website and the school is in close contact with a similar school to compare performance. In classrooms, teachers keep binders to hold data on student performance, and in one grade 7 math classroom wall charts indicate clearly the progress of students as they master competences. There is also a degree of self-assessment, as students complete a sheet entitled an "effort meter" to evaluate how hard they have worked.

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 clearly displays measurable goals for each grade and class on its walls so that all stakeholders can see what the school is aiming to achieve. It refers to these as "projections" and they are based upon an assessment of students' past performance. The Comprehensive Education Plan has clear numerical targets. The objectives for special education students set out in their individual education plans are specific. Students also have interim goals in terms of what they must learn next if they are to progress. However, they are not set specific measurable goals for the longer term, nor interim goals that would serve as benchmarks on the way to reaching them.

The school has focused well on groups of students causing particular concern. For example, it is well aware that it has proved difficult to raise the proportion of students who reach proficiency in English language arts and so the inquiry team is concentrating on the improvement of the comprehension skills of students scoring 2.5 to 2.7 in the State test. The principal and his staff have worked hard to raise the expectations of students, which have been very low in the past. As part of this, students have a range of incentives, such as placement on an honor roll. This is steadily changing the culture of the school to one where more and more students want to achieve well and try hard to do

so. The school provides parents with a good flow of information on how well their children are progressing, with four annual report cards, four progress reports and two formal parent/teacher conferences. It has an open door policy to parents and has worked hard to involve them in the life of the school through such initiatives as a “bring a parent to school day” and family and movie nights. A number of parents are committed workers who support the school well, but many are rarely if ever seen.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

The school now has a well-established core curriculum, with a pacing calendar to show what has to be covered in each marking period. Rubrics showing the competencies that student need to master are posted in many classrooms. The school has attempted to expand the extra-curricular opportunities for students, for example by introducing basketball teams, but the range is narrow and participation low. It currently does not schedule art during the school day. Important budgetary decisions have been made to improve the teaching of special education students and provide common planning time for teachers. With these arrangements in place, it is now making well-judged decisions to increase its stock of modern technology and expand the range of courses it can offer students as a way of motivating them.

Teachers observe basic instructional routines consistently, which is helping students gain clearer expectations of what they are learning. For example, teachers post each lesson’s learning objectives, which students then write in their books, although the precision of the objectives is variable. Teaching is strong in a number of classrooms, where the social environment is good and the work is purposeful and brisk. In a minority of classes, teachers are still struggling to manage behavior effectively. The result is that classrooms are noisy, students show insufficient respect to staff and it is difficult to implement strategies where students can interact profitably with each other. The school is well aware of the importance of using data to differentiate instruction. It achieves this in some ways, for example through the 100 Book Challenge, where reading books are pitched at different levels. In most lessons, however, work is not matched to the learning needs of individuals or groups, so that students who find the work too hard or too easy do not make as much progress as they should. Attendance remains below 90% but is improving. The school has good procedures in place to chase up absence and is successfully emphasizing the importance of being in school through incentive arrangements and frequent celebrations of good attendance.

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 proficient.

The principal has succeeded in improving the morale of the staff and their sense of teamwork. This has been achieved through the scheduling of common planning time and good professional development. Teachers now meet routinely for two periods a

week, for a grade and a subject meeting. Teachers also have good opportunities to visit each other's classrooms and learn from one another. As one so aptly said, "There is no thievery in teaching!" Professional development has been very well targeted. The school has adopted the Californian Professional Teaching Standards as a way of diagnosing teachers' strengths and areas for growth, and it has made good strategic decisions on what to prioritize. Over the past year, the main emphasis has rightly been on classroom management and writing across the curriculum. The administration knows what is going on in classrooms through its program of lesson observations, which includes a weekly schedule of informal visits. Teachers receive feedback on a sheet with the headings "Glows" and "Grows" for strengths and areas for development. Teachers new to the profession are supported soundly through mentoring arrangements.

The school focuses strongly on promoting students' personal development and building good relationships. Students attend a "home room" on a daily basis, and are supported by a dean and a guidance counselor. Use is made of external partnerships such as Sound Minds for grade 8 students to build character and job readiness. The success of these initiatives, combined with the enthusiasm and care shown by the staff, is seen in the steadily improving tone of the building. The learning climate is impaired, however, by the noisy behavior of students in some areas. The school has clear rules that students should observe, and a progressive sanctions policy for teachers to use when needed. However, these rules and procedures are not followed consistently.

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.

The principal has communicated a clear vision that drives the work of the school. It is contained in the school's logo: "MS534: Where Students S.O.A.R." The letters stand for studious, organized, articulate and responsible. The school has had some success in building the sort of community that will foster these attributes, but it knows that there is some way to go to make them a reality for all students. The school's progress is well monitored through the range of data it now generates and collates, and by the regular classroom visiting. It has not yet burrowed beneath all the information to identify the blockages to student progress, but the inquiry team's action research is creating a more reflective approach to the school's curriculum and instruction.

A number of long-term measurable goals exist for the school as a whole, and for grades and classes, against which the school's performance is measured. The school does not set longer-term measurable goals for each student, or interim targets to gauge the rate of progress. It does, however, frequently review how well each student is performing and, where necessary, adjusts plans and interventions. The goals for each class indicate to teachers the achievement expected of their students, although specific developmental goals for each teacher are not yet negotiated at the start of the year.

The school makes well-judged strategic decisions on the basis of the data it collects. Examples include the decision a year ago to "departmentalize" special education students so that they are taught by subject specialists, the introduction of extensive common planning time to build the staff's capacity for change, and the recent priorities for professional development.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Academy of Instructional Technology	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 rigorous, 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 and tardiness?				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, and effectively address discipline related incidents?		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		

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped