



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Albert Einstein School

Middle School. 131

**885 Bolton Avenue
Bronx**

Principal: Edward Leotta

Dates of review: May 28 – 30, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Donna Dimino

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 Albert Einstein School, which shares a site with an elementary school, is a middle school with 875 students from grade six through grade eight. The school population comprises 39% Black, 57% Hispanic and 3% Asian students. The student body includes .045% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 90.2%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 73.7% eligibility.

The school is divided into three academies: The Leadership Academy, The Arts Academy, and The Academy of Science and Technology. Each academy is supervised by its own assistant principal and is supported by separate student support service teams including a dean. The principal was appointed in July 2007.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The Principal makes strategic, budgetary, staffing and programming decisions to increase student outcomes.
- School leaders provide professional development that is planned according to staff needs as revealed by data and observation.
- Good systems have been developed to provide leaders with a clear picture of strengths and weaknesses in teaching.
- Special education students are well supported and so make good gains in their learning.
- Extensive external partnerships provide a wide array of services to meet the various needs of students.
- Professional development is an integral part of the school's short and long-term goals and is based on staff and student needs.
- Leaders have a clear understanding of students and their individual needs from their good analysis of data
- The school makes good use data to identify support and services for those students in greatest need of improvement.
- The school promotes a climate for learning that encourages an integrated curricular approach enhanced by technology and the arts.

What the school needs to improve

- Formalize systems for monitoring the progress of all initiatives at regular intervals to better identify patterns and assess program effectiveness.
- Analyze data about sub-groups performance more accurately and use the information to identify and overcome variations in learning outcomes.
- Improve teachers' use of data in planning lessons whose content, structure, resourcing and pace meet the needs of all students.
- Ensure that positive behavior management systems are consistently applied so all students are engaged in learning in a supportive environment.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

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

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Since his appointment the principal has worked vigorously with a dedicated cabinet to build a learning environment that promotes high quality learning for students. Staff respects the administration and the culture of shared decision-making. Although the culture has been one where teachers self-initiate their support of each other, they now value the formal opportunities being developed for planning together as well as having a voice in new initiatives and the direction of the school. To paraphrase one teacher, IS 131 is a place where teachers have many opportunities to take on leadership roles. Administrators and teachers all have high expectations for the students' success with an eye toward college. An incentive system for positive behavior has been introduced this year and, although it has yet to be operated consistently, has begun to have a favorable impact.

There has been some progress with points raised in the last Quality Review. The school has strengthened the home-school connection with the introduction of a school-based website that provides information that is valued by parents. Some teachers have begun to expand progress reporting more frequently with the aid of grading software, although this is by no means consistent practice. The school has improved its collection of state and interim assessment data, which alongside the results of interim testing, are analyzed well by leaders. Although teachers use data to inform meaningful instruction effectively in English language arts and with students in greatest need of improvement, there remain inconsistencies across the school. Staff have begun to look at more subtle data such as student portfolios to design more effective differentiated instruction for targeted students. User-friendly assessment systems to reflect incremental gains are not in place. The inquiry team has successfully raised achievement for its target group. Implications from the team's work around effective writing instruction have served to improve language arts practice with English language learners.

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 Albert Einstein School has developed a good system of data collection. It makes full use of State assessments, Acuity and Scantron periodic assessments. Leaders

make good comparisons of student performance, based on comparisons amongst classrooms, grades and subject areas. The cabinet analyzes and disseminates whole school and interim data to teachers who collect it in classroom data binders. This is supplemented by samples of writing to give a balance of objective data and student work. The data on special education students has been used well to determine effective ways of organizing their instruction. While Acuity and Scantron provide useful interim data about student performance in language arts and mathematics, the use of data to assess gains and better inform targeted small group instruction is sporadic across staff.

Teachers use checklists to gain a deeper understanding of the needs of the lowest-achieving students in English language arts. A generalized use of checklists or other systems for collecting sub-skill data for all student groups, and across subjects is not yet in place. School leaders are aware of teachers' varying levels of information about their students. In response, the school is comparing its performance with other schools in its network. One school in particular has been targeted by leaders and key staff as most similar and showing strong achievement in English language arts. After much informed research, the school has brought in a language arts consultant expert in school reform. As a result, a multi-layered approach to build staff capacity in the collection and meaningful use data has occurred. Through a combination of common planning periods, focused instructional faculty and grade meetings, and the creation of voluntary committees, the school, as a whole, effectively uses data to improve outcomes.

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 has made a good start in encouraging collaboration among teachers in reviewing data and identifying intervention matched to the needs of individual students. Special education students have been a major focus this year. Results from looking at student work revealed that the implementation of several explicit strategies led to improvements in their writing. This led to setting similar goals for effective writing with other groups with similar needs, particularly the English Language Learners. During faculty meetings as well as voluntary work sessions such as common preparation periods and lunch and learns, staff look at individual and whole class strengths and weaknesses. Common preparation periods have been provided for content teachers across academies and grades to collaborate and plan voluntarily. This has had a positive impact on fostering a unified approach to curriculum. Additional mandated periods for planning are not in effect.

Assistant principals regularly discuss school improvement goals and gains at faculty and department level, which adds to staff awareness of progress towards whole-school priorities. The literacy committee has written its first Newsletter and the school website keeps all stakeholders, including parents, informed of initiatives and progress. Quarterly progress reports and report cards give them details about their children's progress. Some teachers use Grade Keeper software to communicate progress more frequently, but this has yet to become established practice. Talk of college and career choice is commonplace between teachers and students, which confirms the high expectations teachers have of their students. However, while students can speak readily about their performance level, they are less certain about what they need to do to improve.

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.

The school’s three academies follow a solid core curriculum as well as a carefully arranged supplementary curriculum that gives students access to mandated subjects, creative arts, technology and community service outreach. The focus this year is to improve literacy achievement for special education, English Language Learners and grade 7 students. There is a custom-designed pacing calendar for mathematics, that is aligned with the standards. Equally, the literacy committee is designing curriculum maps so that reading and writing is contiguous within and across grades. This work has begun to define expected practice in teachers’ planning to better meet the needs of students. Some lessons are engaging and differentiated, in which students take ownership for their learning. However, students describe too many lessons as ‘boring’, where they have little opportunity for discussion as the lessons are predominantly teacher-led. Consequently, students of higher and lower than average ability are disengaged and underachieve.

School leaders are working steadfastly to improve the quality of instruction. The principal has ensured the strategic hiring and allocation of staff and the creation of ancillary positions to support the school’s goals. The school is quick to respond when breaches in positive interactions between staff and students have become evident. Training in positive behavior management and the introduction of an incentive program have both been initiated this year, and have begun to reduce the reactive element of the administration’s work. “Smart bucks” reinforce positive behaviors including full attendance. There are good systems in place to track and deal promptly with absence and lateness through telephone calls and home visits. As a result, there has been a modest increase in attendance since last year.

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 professional teaching standards are used well to focus formal observation reports to ensure consistency. Informal walkthrough checklists with rubrics are used by each administrator to support the school’s differentiated approach to teacher development. Teacher portfolios are maintained to track teachers’ development as professionals. Much professional development is teacher-led and occurs during professional meetings. Formal and informal observations inform the focus of faculty meetings. Voluntary lunch and learns, as well as scheduled inter-visitations, are facilitated and monitored by each assistant principal and serve to further build teacher capacity. Comparisons amongst special education students have led to a revised Collaborative Team Teaching model whereby previously self-contained students and the special education teacher now move together to subject area teachers resulting in higher student motivation. However, the

lack of formalized systems for monitoring the progress of initiatives at regular intervals makes it difficult for the school to assess program effectiveness.

Staff and students are aware of agreed procedures for conduct within the building and as a result the school runs smoothly for the most part. The school has implemented a positive behavior support program this year where students earn smart bucks for meeting a desired outcome. However, there are inconsistencies in the way that academies record and follow breaches of agreed behavior codes. As a result, not all students appreciate this as a way of recognizing positive behavior. Extensive external partnerships enhance the core curriculum with integrated and applied learning projects. Other external partners provide after-school activities and the Gear Up grant tracks the grade 7 students through college.

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 leadership is a united force determined to drive the school forward through the use of data to ensure rigorous instruction. Although a discreet long-term action plan with measurable objectives, timelines and review dates for all school improvement initiatives has not been formalized, leaders have an informal understanding of specific goals as necessary to improvement. This is increasingly shared with staff who feel that they have an investment in the school's improvement plan. Staff have begun to collaborate across grades and subject areas to determine goals for students and align instruction accordingly. For example, the literacy committee is following a pacing calendar of short-term goals that have the potential to produce meaningful formative evaluation and revision. Teachers have begun to use information from both formal and informal assessments and group students flexibly. However, these goals are not systematically monitored throughout the year, so the school cannot be certain if students are on track towards success.

Data-driven decision-making has become part of the school's practice. School leaders regularly review the outcomes of periodic assessments, and use the information to determine academic intervention. The pupil personnel team looks at both hard and soft data to improve outcomes for individual students. However, systems to track student gains across subjects have yet to be implemented.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Albert Einstein 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 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