

Quality Review Report

2009-2010

The Isaac Asimov School

Elementary – Middle School 99

**1120 East 10th Street
Brooklyn
NY 11230**

Principal: Gregory Pirraglia

Dates of review: November 7 – 8, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Ann Marie Lettieri-Baker

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Isaac Asimov is an elementary-middle school with 702 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 13% Black, 22% Hispanic, 27% White, and 38% Asian students. The student body includes 20% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 91.9%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Isaac Asimov School celebrates the accomplishments of both students and staff through regular assembly programs to recognize academic achievements as well as conduct. Students know what is required of them through the regular goal-setting conversations that they have with their teachers. Additionally, students want to do well and to be challenged in all of their classes. The work of the staff is celebrated as part of the monthly faculty conference agendas as well as at team and department meetings. Parents, however, are just beginning to understand how well their children are performing and their academic needs through the distribution of interim progress reports. The school's website, although a valuable resource of information for the parent community, does not yet contain grade or content level information that parents may access and use to further support their children.

The principal is a highly effective manager who is well liked, respected and supported by students, staff and parents. The alignment of his instructional goals with the school's resources has allowed for instructional opportunities beyond the regular school day to service struggling students, with an emphasis on the needs of English language learners. An enrichment program provided beyond the school day is successful in meeting the needs of high attaining students.

Teachers regularly analyze their students' summative assessment results from Acuity and the New York State testing program. This analysis enables teachers to plan effectively for small groups and differentiate learning activities, which help students to meet their performance outcome goals in most subject areas. Teachers do not currently have a system in place that enables them to design and administer formative assessments aligned to the school's curriculum. A valuable practice in most classrooms across subject areas includes the use of rubrics to evaluate students' written work and projects.

The school's collaborative inquiry work includes most staff members and is focused on the poor writing skills of English language learners. The core Inquiry Team meets to discuss how it will provide professional support to grade level and content-area teams and to evaluate student work and data to identify trends. Core team members liaise with the multiple teams in the school and guide professional learning in support of the identified target populations of students.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's highly motivating and inclusive environment engages students in differentiated learning activities that move them to high levels of achievement.
 - Small group, differentiated instruction throughout the school day in English language arts and mathematics, ensures that students' individual needs are met. In the science department of the middle school, differentiated independent assignments and strategic grouping further enhance student learning.
 - Supportive structures celebrate the successes of students and staff members, resulting in them feeling good about their accomplishments and achievements. Students speak about the importance of being on the honor roll, achieving their academic goals and want to be even more challenged in their classes.
- Most staff members are engaged in a grade level or content-area collaborative inquiry process, where weekly exchanges of ideas and best practices focus on developing strong and effective teaching.
 - Student work aligns to evaluative rubrics, enabling teachers to make valuable instructional decisions for their target populations. During one team meeting, teachers' analysis revealed that some students needed additional support with writing. This led to a presentation and discussion around the use of 'My Skills Tutor', a computer software program designed to assist students with their writing mechanics and to provide teachers with both formative and summative data to identify performance and progress.
- The principal is a highly effective manager who has aligned the school's resources to the instructional goals, thus providing invaluable support to students in need.
 - Title III funding is effectively used to support the needs of English language learners. The scheduling and implementation of a specifically designed after school program meets the needs of this particular struggling population of students very well.
 - Contracts for Excellence funds are used well. They support the needs of early childhood grade struggling learners through skilled, academic intervention specialists working in classrooms to assist teachers with small group, targeted instruction aligned to the students' goals in reading and mathematics.
- The teachers articulate short- and long-term professional goals which reflect the school's achievement goals and set the framework for the organization of professional development opportunities.
 - Although formal observations are not currently used to evaluate each teacher's performance in the classroom, each teacher writes their own professional goals. These are aligned to the principal's Goals and

Objectives plan and the school's Comprehensive Education Plan. This experienced staff of tenured teachers wrote their professional goals in September and then discussed them with the principal and/or his assistant principals to develop an action plan of support. The teachers' goals will be discussed again in February for a mid-year progress conversation. This practice has enabled the administration of the school to plan and execute differentiated professional development opportunities for all teachers.

- The literacy and math coaches have established model classrooms in both subject areas to illustrate good practice for teachers. Teachers' regular visits to other schools in the empowerment network and observation of their own colleagues help them to implement best practices in their own classrooms.
- Parents are active partners in their children's education and regularly engage in shared decision making, resulting in the school community's commitment to the continued improvement of every child.
 - In addition to the regular school report cards, the principal sends parents progress reports which outline their child's accomplishments and goals for improvement, as well as other relevant data and guidance on how to assist their child at home.
 - Parents are encouraged to e-mail their child's classroom teachers who respond to them in kind. Parents appreciate the administrative staff's open-door policy and feel welcome whenever they visit the school, resulting in parents perceiving their school community as a "home away from home."
- The school has established good instructional rubrics which are used to guide students to self reflect and plan their next learning steps.
 - The teachers' good use of rubrics has enabled them to evaluate student work in a timely way in order to plan next learning steps for groups of and individual learners. Additionally, student's' use of rubrics throughout a unit enables them to self-assess and monitor the progress they are making toward the achievement of high performance grades and outcomes.
 - Rubrics are prominently displayed in classrooms, sending a clear message about rigor and expectations to all students.

What the school needs to improve

- Establish systems and routines to enable teachers to create, administer and evaluate formative assessments in order to obtain timely and meaningful feedback on the effectiveness of instructional decisions and planning.
 - Teachers analyze student data, including summative results of their New York State testing program assessments and their Acuity predictive and instructionally targeted assessments. In several subject areas however, including English language arts, formative assessments are not aligned to the curriculum, so do not provide teachers with timely and immediate data related to students' next learning steps.

- Create rigorous structures to regularly evaluate and adjust assessment practices across the school to ensure that all available data is used to evaluate both the school's programs and also the quality of teaching.
 - The school has no system to ensure that the analysis of the various formal assessment programs is having a meaningful impact on student performance through effective instructional planning. Additionally, members of the administration do not observe teachers to determine their use of assessment information to focus their instruction.
- Refine systems for ensuring that families receive regular feedback concerning their children's progress and opportunities for support so that they have a more active role in assisting their children with reaching their achievement goals.
 - Parents receive interim progress reports of their child's academic accomplishments and needs between formal report cards, although this is a fairly new practice. The school plans to disseminate information to parents on its website beginning in December. This website will include monthly news by grade level as well as content area and will be written by teachers. In addition, parents of silver and gold honor roll students appreciate the congratulatory letters from the administration, which thank them for their participation in their child's academic growth and success. These separate pieces of information are however not well coordinated or aligned to the expected performance outcomes for students. As a result, parents do not fully understand how well their own child is achieving, or what is required and are unaware of the resources that they can access to further assist their child at home.
- Develop relationships with external partnerships and community-based organizations to provide child and youth development services for students and families in need, to help overcome their children's social, emotional or behavioral problems.
 - The school-student support structure includes one full-time guidance counselor, who works with students who are mandated to receive counseling services. The counselor is in charge of the application process to articulation of fifth and eighth grade students to middle and high school. A part-time school psychologist works with groups of identified at risk students. In consequence, parents do not have sufficient opportunity to secure professional support for the social or emotional needs of their children.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: The Isaac Asimov School	△	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?				X
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?				X
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?				X
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?				X
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?			X	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.

<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?				X
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?			X	
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			X	
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?				X
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?				X
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?				X
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4				X

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

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?				X
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X	
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?			X	
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X	

Quality Review Scoring Key							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed