

# **Quality Review Report 2009-2010**

**The Isaac Remsen School**

**Elementary School  
325 Bushwick Avenue  
Brooklyn  
New York 11206**

**Principal: Julia DiSalvo Drake**

**Dates of review: November 16 - 17, 2009**

**Lead Reviewer: James Quail**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Isaac Remsen School is an elementary school with 255 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 43% Black, 57% Hispanic, and less than 1% White and Asian students. The student body includes 14% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 91.6%.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is well developed.**

The principal is a strategic thinker and planner and shares her passion for raising achievement with the entire community. This helps to create such a warm, positive, and nurturing learning environment in the school and fosters high expectations. The positive relationships allow the school to focus on student outcomes. Its systems and partnerships with various outside organizations support students and their families in continual learning and promote students' personal growth and development. School leaders and the faculty make purposeful decisions about curricula, including the arts that emphasize rigorous habits and high order skills and embed them across and within grades and subject areas. As a result, the school provides for the differentiated needs of students via rich, rigorous, and varied learning experiences. The school uses data well to provide differentiation of instruction in the vast majority of classrooms. However, the school has not yet enhanced and refined its comprehensive instructional plan for English language learners by using its resources and assessments more effectively to support these students and accelerate their progress.

The school helps families to understand student performance and provides timely and consistent communication to support and engage them in improving student outcomes. A data driven needs assessment informs goal setting and action planning at the school level. It looks at student outcomes over interim timeframes within each class and grade. The school consistently uses data to monitor and revise its planning, instructional decisions and practices to meet assessed and noted needs. Teachers in all grades and subjects use monthly test results, periodic assessments, and conference notes to denote interim pupil progress thus supporting their planning and inquiry work in these areas. This process enables the school to know the precise instructional and social needs of its students and in turn, it supports them to assist children in monitoring and assessing their own learning. Teachers examine grade, class, and individual work, continuously and collaboratively and develop short and long-term goals with measurable outcomes. This enables them to plan in a smart and precise fashion and encourages them to revisit and or revise their strategies to improve student outcomes. Collaborative work centers on looking at common assessments and studying them for pupil, grade and class academic and social strengths, and weaknesses. The school does not apply the same processes to improve student attendance and thus maximize the time available for learning. The school's use of observations, learning walks and analysis of data does not yet maximize the chances to share and celebrate teacher practices by encouraging professionals to take on various leadership roles and deepen the work of its many grade and specialized teams.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Positive, supportive relationships between teachers, students, and parents foster an orderly, respectful, and nurturing learning environment focused on student outcomes and learning.
  - All learners are welcome and receive a broad, rigorous education with clear, measurable personal and academic goals and interim benchmarks. Teacher teams view and assess on-going learning in all curricula areas to identify student progress and determine clear, expectations for each student. Students also assess their own work and know their next steps in the learning process.
- The rich curricula, aligned to State standards, including the arts, engage all students in valuable and differentiated learning experiences.
  - Specialists in art, music and dance instruction, a pertinent technology program, an Aussie, and a new LitLife program, supported and welcomed by the staff, enrich the curriculum. Talented external providers and a relevant extended day program provide enrichment and additional literacy support, where necessary. Teachers review student work and data in collaborative teams to plan the next steps in learning and instruction carefully. Students make excellent progress because of these rich and diversified learning experiences.
- Leaders and faculty use data systematically to identify the progress of classes, grades, individual, and groups of students to revise practices and programs to improve learning.
  - All formative and summative data, including school and State results, information from Acuity, on going and unit assessments, conference notes, and parent and teacher surveys aptly informs planning and practice. As a result, instruction, supported by appropriate materials, meets the varied and precise needs of all students. For instance, the vast variety of attractive, new, and interesting books support the different reading needs and interests of students.
- All students have short and long-term goals with measurable outcomes, rigorously monitored to identify their progress and make adjustments as required.
  - Students know what they need to do to improve their learning and who supports them on this. This focused and meaningful student reflection enables the school to match instruction to student needs and gives the learners a voice and ownership of their own learning. Students in the small group session related their own projects to their specific needs and plans for improvement, thus showing they knew their role and work in this learning process.

- Teachers collaborate on a continuous basis to examine student work and data, which they use to inform planning and adjust their practices to meet the specific instructional needs of students.
  - o Each teacher and grade uses various assessment tools in all subject areas to monitor and track pupil progress over time. They utilize the data for teacher collaborative meetings to study and revise practice and plans, when necessary. Inquiry teams on each grade reflect on their work and progress. These systems and structures encourage and support the close monitoring of pupil progress and needs in academic and social development. They also support teachers' reflection on their planning and practice to improve student outcomes.
- The principal has established a very effective system to study, assess, and modify the school's plans and efforts to improve student and adult learning.
  - o ARIS and its parent portal, regular data talks with staff, the use of rubrics in the all subjects, discussions, parent and student share sheets, after school and evening celebration and events, Learning Leaders, Book Caterpillar, blogs and Twitter for parents, report cards and teacher surveys provide invaluable information for the school. All of these resources and data pieces enable the school to continuously and purposefully monitor and revise its practices, programs and strategies to improve learning. The successful implementation of the LitLife program is one result of its efforts to improve student and adult learning.
- Staff, students, and parents endorse the school's high expectations and are actively involved in raising standards.
  - o The school uses a social improvement program on a school wide basis with interim and long-range goals for students and the parent coordinator provides active and positive assistance. Together with the added number of engaging and purposeful family activities and programs, these assist the school in setting clear and high expectations for learning. The parents hold the principal in high regard. This positive and supportive home and school relationship helps improve student academic and social learning.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Refine the goals and instruction for English language learners to include relevant technology and resources and raise family engagement in their children's learning.
  - o The school is aware that some parents of English language learners express a desire to attend and receive additional activities and supports for their family, including learning together in a parent-student program. It is currently reflecting on the programs, activities and experiences afforded to this population to increase the focus on positive outcomes for this group.
  - o Instruction does not meet the precise needs of all English language learners and this hinders their progress. The school does not yet provide sufficient workshops, training, and the use of language specialists to enhance the classroom instruction for this group.

- Extend the use of professional collaboration and inquiry across all grades to improve student attendance and thus improve their learning.
  - The school does not apply the vast amount of reflection, planning, and use of data for its academic and social programs to individual, class and grade attendance data. The lack of this precision and laser like focus on attendance trends is hindering the school in its understanding of the next steps to increase student learning and academic outcomes.
  - The attendance plan does not incorporate opportunities to develop strategies and programs to meet the precise needs of students who exhibit long term or excessive absences.
- Improve the collaborative use of data and the outcomes of classroom observations to identify and share best practices to enable staff raise standards and take on new leadership roles.
  - Teachers plan in a smart fashion as they collaborate on identifying and assessing student needs. There are not enough additional opportunities for teachers to share their strengths, ideas, and practices in an effort to improve learning and increase student outcomes. This is particularly so regarding the support for English language learners. Teachers skilled in this area of instruction have little opportunity to share their practices, ideas, and suggestions to build capacity and improve student outcomes.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: The Isaac Remsen School	△	▷	✓	+
Overall QR Score				X
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.s</b>				
<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
<b>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.</b>				
<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

<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	▷	✓	+			
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			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				<b>X</b>			
<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	▷	✓	+			
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			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>				<b>X</b>			
<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	▷	✓	+			
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				
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>				<b>X</b>			
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
△	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	▷	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>	✓	<b>Proficient</b>	+	<b>Well Developed</b>