



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

**Quality Review Report
Division of Performance and Accountability
2010-2011**

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

Isaac Newton Middle School for Math & Science

Intermediate School M825

**260 Pleasant Avenue
New York, NY 10035**

Principal: Lisa Nelson

Dates of review: December 6 - 7, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Luz T. Cortazzo

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Isaac Newton Middle School for Math & Science is a middle school with 362 students from 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 23% Black, 73% Hispanic, 1% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 57% of the students enrolled and girls account for 43%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 93.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal aligns resources and makes informed and effective organizational decisions across all aspects of the school to support students in learning.
 - The use of teacher time is coherent with the school goals. Creative use of the budget and scheduling allows for teacher team meetings, the literacy coach, and assistant principal to meet regularly to analyze data and identify instructional strategies to raise student achievement. Teachers receive professional development on analyzing current data and goal setting to best support learning needs. Literacy and math consultants work with the faculty to accelerate student achievement.
 - Extended learning time as part of grade level teams is one of four organizational structures designed to ensure students' academic success. Teams of teachers on each grade level are responsible for planning and executing the extended day for specific group of students. During specifically designed six week clinics, teachers provide interventions for struggling students that they themselves have identified. Teachers are using the data and classroom observations and assessments to improve their instructional practice, and target the skills needed by specific groups of students. Measures such as this result in students' engaging in challenging academic tasks and showing greater competencies in targeted skills.
- The school provides a safe, nurturing environment that fosters high expectations and coordinates supports that impact positively on students' personal and academic development.
 - The school is a safe haven where students' social-emotional and academic needs are readily addressed. The affiliation with The East Harlem Community Justice Center, attendance court, a truancy prevention program, that provides students and their families with services and other resources in a supportive, community setting in order to keep chronically absent students out of family court has resulted in improved attendance, from 91.8% in 2008 to 93.8% in 2009.
 - Students know that teachers and other staff members swiftly resolve conflicts and concerns and they strive to act in ways that reflect the values emphasized in the school: "be safe, be kind, and be productive". Students say that, "the principal care for us". They say, "We can go to any teacher because they handle problems nicely". Thus all students know there is someone there for them. This results in a culture where safety incidents are minimal, as evidenced by the decreasing number of superintendent's suspensions from 75, to 27 last academic year thus enabling students to focus on their academic growth.
- Effective student support services and collaborations provide students with a wide range of opportunities to grow academically and socially, creating a supportive school environment.
 - School guidance counselors and social workers provide well-delivered professional development to staff thus ensuring that they are very prepared to

provide requisite supports to 'challenging students'. Partnerships such as focused collaborations with Mt. Sinai's Adolescent Mental health clinic, provides screening for all students and matches students and families with mental health resources to meet their needs whether on-site or within the community. Citizen Schools, a nationally recognized model, uses community members as educators to share their passion and provide youth with opportunities to present their work to authentic audiences, and Union Settlement House, a child advocacy group dedicated to improving the health and welfare of the students increase their academic support, and enhance the school's ability to provide them with stimulation to build self-esteem, increase curiosity and build leadership capacity. These supports are deeply embedded in school culture and directly help students and families during the day and after school resulting in increased motivational levels leading to students growing academically and socially.

- The school works closely and shares relevant information with parents and students to encourage good attendance and academic achievement with a focus on future college readiness resulting in a school culture focused on high achievement.
 - The school's newsletters, calendars, and individual conferences with parents and students support the mutual exchange of information. These resources provide parents with a steady flow of information, resulting in clear expectations regarding student performance and impacting increased academic growth. School leaders and faculty at the school note that their core mission is to advance the college awareness of all students. To that end, the principal ensures that all resources strategically aligned with school-wide goals in order to maximize student outcomes. Multiple intervention resources and enrichment activities promote the students' social, emotional and academic growth through the school and partnered organizations.
 - School leaders and faculty facilitate interactive parent workshops relating to the use of ARIS Parent Link, Acuity data, Learning Environment Survey, standards, and test sophistication strategies to help parents better understand students' performance. These meetings allow parents to keep informed of their children's academic strengths and weaknesses and enable them to participate in the planning for next learning steps, thereby strengthening the home-school connection.
- Teachers across the school welcome opportunities to participate in collaborative inquiry and professional development and use this to strengthen instruction and raise learning outcomes.
 - A majority of teachers participate on grade level teams, and academic department teams, using an inquiry approach. Two weekly common planning periods, as well as afterschool professional development time as part of the Extended Day structure allows teachers to meet regularly to look at student writing, review and revise classroom lessons, share strategies, and discuss their anchor text 6+1 Traits of Writing. Positive outcomes include improvements in conventions of writing for the English language learners subgroup studied by the vertical team.
 - Content area coaches, data specialist and teachers facilitate teacher teams as they are empowered to be key decision makers regarding actions that affect student learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine the curriculum emphasizing rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills for a variety of learners with different needs.
 - Although school leaders and staff develop curriculum maps aligned to key standards, many teachers do not demonstrate the necessary skill level to adapt the curricula so that it challenges students performing at varied ability levels. Moreover, performance-based tasks that probe for deep understanding, application of learning and promote rigorous habits do not coherently extend across all content areas or grade levels so that every student is duly challenged.
- Standardize feedback to teachers based on classroom observations to promote professional growth and elevate instructional practices.
 - Although a common instructional focus is supported by school leaders and supported by a majority of teachers, the school does not provide regular feedback to teachers that is articulated by leadership and aligned to a professional teaching standards rubric, hindering the school's ability to follow up to support teachers' development based on student data and classroom observation.
- Promote greater consistency in differentiated instruction to ensure that instruction provides entry points for learning activities matched to students' capabilities that lead to high levels of engagement and extends thinking.
 - The school is developing a shared set of beliefs to align curriculum and teaching practice and to articulate how students learn best. Although some teachers differentiate, this is not always consistent across all classes. As a result, some teachers do not always address individual learning needs. Additionally, the limited amount of student work evident in classrooms hinders the teacher's ability to provide next steps for students to produce meaningful work products.
- Deepen data analysis so that the academic needs of special education students and English language learners are met.
 - Although team of teachers supplement summative data analysis by examining Periodic assessment data, their analysis is not rigorous enough to determine the progress of special education and English language learners across all grades and subjects. This prevents the school from identifying trends, and implementing precise instructional strategies hampering the acceleration for these two subgroups.
- Expand the use of data analysis to evaluate and revise as needed processes and programs within the school that lead to effective professional collaborations.
 - Although inquiry teams set appropriate goals and track student progress, school leaders have not instituted coherent and aligned systems across all teams that continually monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these collaborations. As a result, teams are not receiving the support that would enable them to deepen their leadership skills as key decision makers during inquiry sessions.

School name: Isaac Newton	UD	D	P	WD
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?		X		
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, 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	

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>	UD	D	P	WD
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	

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>	UD	D	P	WD			
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			
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>	UD	D	P	WD			
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					
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed