

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Isaac Bildersee Middle School

K068

**956 East 82nd Street
Brooklyn
NY 11236**

Principal: Merve Williams

Dates of review: October 25 - 26, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Beverly A. Wilkins

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Isaac Bildersee Middle School is a middle school with 901 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 91% Black, 5% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 90.5%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders are committed to providing teachers with direct and frequent feedback on a regular basis through mini, informal, and formal observations in order to improve teacher effectiveness and performance. (4.1)
 - The use of the school's Feedback Loop Template on Google Docs places a focus on low inference data in order to evaluate teacher mastery within a research based rubric which outlines performance expectations in the areas of questioning and student engagement. As such, experienced and novice teachers in particular, receive timely and specific counsel on their practice and have delineated next steps for development. Therefore, formal observations and frequent online reciprocal communication between administrators and teachers provide the impetus for an instructionally coherent school culture, and generate incisive assessment of the staff's professional development needs.
- The principal, in collaboration with key stakeholders, makes informed instructional and organizational decisions that link various components of school life in order to support teaching and learning. (1.3)
 - The principal's clearly defined instructional priorities are aligned to the school's mission, performance goals, and the Comprehensive Educational Plan and utilized to drive organizational decisions. One goal this year is to endeavor to raise the level of proficiency among newcomers and intermediate English language learners. To address this target, the principal disbanded a self-contained English as a Second Language class. As a result, immersion in cognitive academic language experiences alongside English dominant peers provide a subgroup of students with enriched communication opportunities resulting in an accelerated use of written language evidenced by their narrative essays and responses to literature over time.
 - Three small learning communities serve as a springboard in the development of personalized learning resulting in distinct department and multiple grade-level interdisciplinary teacher teams. Because the effective programming of common planning time supports teacher collaborations three times per week, targeted subgroups of students benefit from subject related and cross curriculum teacher discourse. For example, one team is working on supporting inferencing across subject areas. This work engenders the identification of school-wide trends and potential intervention strategies in order to bring students to where they need to be.
- The school leaders analyze and examine a range of significant assessments and diagnostic measures that produce targeted school-wide improvement plans toward advancing student achievement. (2.1)
 - Data culled from a collection of sources trigger solid, actionable plans that inform whole school strategic improvement efforts. For example, analysis of high profile data revealed adverse trends in literacy performance that

led to the replacement of a longstanding English language arts program. Additionally, positive shifts in social behavior outcomes informed the continuation of Positive Behavior Intervention Support in order to further student achievement.

- In addition to Citywide periodic assessments, the school uses baseline pre-assessments, item analysis results, split level data sheets, and rubrics enabling extensive comprehensive knowledge of strengths and challenges among groups of students. Consequently, some of these findings led to collaborative plans for infusing vocabulary development strategies and incorporating writing standards into all core subject lessons. The use of audio centers to scaffold lessons for students with disabilities and inclusion of intervention resources such as Achieve 3000 and the EdPerformance Series also increase opportunities for academic success in a diversity of learners.
- Administrators, faculty, and school support members convey high expectations to students and their parents while promoting productive home-school relationships. (3.4)
 - A consensus amongst parents interviewed indicates that articulation of high expectations for the success of all students filters "from the principal down." There is an active and visible Parent Association that facilitates a parent book club and is responsible for coordinating a computer program devoted to parent education. In addition, the school's expectations for excellence are communicated via the school's website, global connect call system, workshops, and training sessions for parents and guardians. As such, parents hold themselves accountable for helping the school to educate and prepare their children for the next level of learning. Parents monitor their children's SnapGrade accounts and address concerns, which results in more positive class participation and improved learning behaviors.
 - Students interviewed reported that teachers and staff have high expectations for learning and for their overall success resulting in their determination to do better. One student commented, "My teacher encourages me to do better and helps me to achieve." As students walk through the building, they see recognition of their hard work and effort toward meeting expectations through bulletin board displays of Regal Expectations, which illustrate respectful actions and make public their opinions on school-wide expectations and routines. Completed tasks with teacher feedback and rubrics that outline criteria for high-level work adorn the corridors. Consequently, students express satisfaction with the support they receive from their teachers, deans, and guidance counselors who believe, as the parent coordinator states; "Our kids are number one and can compete with the best."
- The school works as a unified team to create a calm, respectful, and orderly atmosphere, which leads to praise by students and parents for an environment that nurtures academic and social-emotional development. (1.4)
 - The school has created a safe and supportive environment that extends to all members of the community. School leaders, deans, safety agents, and school aides work in tandem to marshal smooth instructional

transitions and end of day departures. This concerted show of supervision underpins commendations and appreciation from parents because their children have good feelings about the school. In turn, teachers also feel supported by administrators because discipline issues are addressed by an effective Positive Behavior Intervention Support Team. As such, one teacher commented, “Teachers enjoy coming to work.”

- The school works to maintain the benefits of its small learning communities. Therefore, students assigned to academies acclimate to a team-spirit environment under the watchful eye of a small cadre of faculty and staff who know students well. One student remarked that when his attendance was low his teacher encouraged him to get to school because “teachers actually care.” The school’s devotion to raising awareness of social issues results in Drug-Free Awareness Week, exposure to motivational speakers, theatre arts, and a daily morning advisory with teachers which centers on academic and social emotional learning. As a result, last year the school experienced a substantial reduction in suspensions.

What the school needs to improve

- Broaden curriculum planning to provide more opportunities for all students to be engaged in cognitively rigorous tasks that develop higher order thinking. (1.1)
 - The school has made notable advances in aligning units of study and rubrics with the Common Core State Standards in English language arts across the grades. In addition, implementation of New York State Standards embody key learning targets in math, social studies and science instruction, which follow city pacing calendars. Nonetheless, the lack of embedded rigor in performance tasks results in low emphasis on higher order thinking skills, thus, students are not afforded adequate challenge thereby thwarting meta-cognition and the development of critical thinking skills. For example, several high achieving students reported not being challenged.
- Ensure that lessons are consistently rigorous and suitably planned to challenge all students and lead to active student engagement. (1.2)
 - This year the school is focusing on the development of teacher questioning and discussion in order to provide multiple entry points, varied supports, and extensions to lessons. Across classrooms and grade levels, students complete tiered activities and work cooperatively in ability groups. However, the vast majority of lessons observed and lesson plans reviewed did not reflect appropriate, intentional teacher inquiry that incites rich student discussions. As such, uneven planning and impromptu questioning do not stimulate high levels of student thinking and participation in differentiated tasks. Consequently, not all students are fully engaged in the learning process.
- Strengthen teacher use of assessments to reflect interim checks of students’ strengths, needs, and progress in order to make necessary adjustments to instructional practices that heighten proficiency. (2.2)

- During regular common planning sessions, teachers, facilitators, and the literacy coach use data-informed and collaborative processes to discuss results of summative and periodic assessments in order to make decisions based on the individual needs of identified groups of students. However, infrequent checks on all groups of students create a lag in adjustments to instructional practices. Therefore, the delivery of tailored lessons is slowed affecting adequate achievement and progress for students within all subgroups.
- The school sets realistic SMART goals for all students. Nevertheless, currently there are no established systems for daily record keeping such as conference notes, strategy checklists, exit slips, or student self-assessment practices, across the school. As a result, specific information that informs day-to-day teaching is not routinely captured. Thus, not all students make adequate achievement gains.
- Evaluate instructional and resource decisions to ensure curriculum and pedagogy consistently align with expectations and standards for increased student mastery and progress. (5.1)
 - Instructional decisions and resources new to the school this year reflect careful thought about academic and pedagogic needs. For example, the purchase of an anthology aligned with Common Core standards, hiring of a new assistant principal, and the creation of a dance teacher position support learning needs of students and adults. However, the lack of measures to closely evaluate implementation of these instructional initiatives or assess the effectiveness of organizational resources hinders necessary shifts in teaching and practices that may need to occur to undergird accelerated learning.
- Create a transparent, cohesive school and class-level data collection system to enable access to meaningful school-wide information thereby fostering necessary next step adjustments to elevate success. (5.2)
 - The principal, assistant principals, teacher teams, and individual teachers examine relevant data to match students to classes, interventions, tiered and at-risk groups. Additionally, parents receive progress and quarterly reports that keep them abreast of pertinent information about their children. However, at this time, the school does not have a school-wide system whereby all members have access to comprehensive data. In addition, because there are no established norms around teacher record keeping, the majority of the faculty does not share a common lens for comparing and discussing data across grades and classes. The lack of cohesive school-wide tools impedes access to important information toward timely adjustments to better student outcomes.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: K068 Isaac Bildersee Middle School	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 as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			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, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?		X		
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?			X	
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students progress toward school and class expectations?			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 staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?			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, guidance/advisement 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, with particular attention to the CCLS?		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