

# Quality Review Report 2013-2014

**The Albert Einstein School**

**08X131**

**885 Bolton Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10473**

**Principal: Monique Mason**

**Dates of review: October 22-23, 2013**

**Lead Reviewer: Timothy Behr**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Albert Einstein is a Junior High School with 725 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 35% Black, 60% Hispanic, 0.5% White, 0.5% multiracial, 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 3.0% Asian students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 90.7%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Teachers incorporate the instructional shifts effectively into classroom instruction, leading to students demonstrating high levels of engagement, good behavior, and enthusiasm for learning. (1.2)
  - The Common Core aligned curricula in English language arts (Scholastic Code X) and Math (CMP3) are being regularly modified to address the academic needs and skills of students. Teachers prioritize questioning and discussion techniques to prompt students to verbally demonstrate mastery of content core content areas. Teachers articulate well, behavior patterns, learning preferences and the general needs of the students in their classes. Across all grades and classes, students consistently arrived to classes on time, and were for the most part polite and prepared, as evidenced through consistent notebook entries and completed homework assignments. Consequently, teachers are providing targeted instruction which is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and the Danielson Framework for Teaching.
  - In a math class students measured their height and arm's length to create a scatter plot. In another class students experienced the relationship between multiplication and division, via an integer product game. In an English language arts class students actively engaged in conversations where they applied content of the Robert Frost poem, "The Road Not Taken", to their own lives. These rich discussions and project based learning activities actively engage students in lessons with cross-curricular correlations that promote high levels of student participation in learning. There are coordinated notebooks (with table of content, date, aim, do-now and notes) across classrooms. As a result, students are highly engaged in lessons, especially during math and science, where they apply thinking skills to complete hands on activities.
- In concert with teacher teams, administrators gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes, prioritizing areas of need that drive adjustments to curriculum and instruction at the school and class level. (2.2)
  - Teachers meet daily to discuss curriculum, student data, including summative test results, and interim classroom performance, which is analyzed via a subject specific grading policy. The school uses Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) as a benchmark assessment to tailor instruction through Response to Intervention Initiatives (RTI) for sixth and seventh grade students. Students grouped as emergent readers receive support via the Wilson and Just Words Phonics based programs, while students who are identified as fluent readers receive assistance via guided reading activities which prioritize interpreting nonfiction texts. Students also use Achieve 3000, an online program, to improve reading comprehension skills. The school is utilizing the curriculum, Word Generation, as part of the Middle School Quality Initiative (MSQI) which also addresses the district's priority of improving students' vocabulary skills. As a result, feedback from these assessments has empowered the school to plan and

adjust targeted instruction and refine curricula to meet the needs of students, as evidenced by reviews of lesson plans and unit maps.

- Teachers examine State test results, DRP and School Net assessments to inform them of what content area strands students have mastered and what they still need to learn. This procedure enables teachers to develop action plans for students. Instructional modifications are aligned to the district initiatives of improving students' vocabulary and mathematical fluency. A school wide initiative entitled RACE (Re-state, Answer, Cite, and Explain) is a strategy students are using to improve their ability to comprehend non-fiction text. For math, students use a strategy called USP-L (Understand, Plan, Solve, and Look back) to check their work. As a result, the purposeful analysis of data which informs action plans and the use of strategies to complete work are improving student progress, as evidenced by the most recent student progress report.
- The first year principal successfully makes data informed and effective organizational decisions that align with the school's instructional objectives to support students' academic progress. (1.3)
  - Creative use of the budget has empowered the new principal to schedule daily opportunities for teams to meet to facilitate implementation of new curricula. The principal and the United Federation of Teachers Chapter Chairperson agreed to a School Based Option which eliminated morning and afternoon homerooms and opted for teachers to have daily common planning time. Peer instructional coaches collaborate with teachers to support teacher development in regards to the Danielson Framework and enhance their understanding of purposeful grouping to differentiate instruction. For example, some seventh grade students are using math games to foster understanding of basic facts while eighth grade students complete measurement activities to demonstrate application of learned skills. Hence, through differentiated instruction, student performance is improving, as evidenced by coordinated notebook entries and the quality of student work displayed in classrooms and hallways.
  - Based on the input of assistant principals, coaches and teachers, the school decided to eliminate academies. There is now a grade structure at the school. Teachers now share the same cohort of students to address issues and or concern to improve performance. There are 7 teachers new to the school this year, all hired through a formalized process in which the cabinet interviews candidates and shares their classroom expectations, utilizing the Danielson Framework to evaluate a demonstration lesson by each candidate. Along with all other teachers, the new teachers receive ongoing support from the network, administration, and coaches to increase student learning. The analysis of curricula has resulted in English language learners and students with disabilities receiving additional support, via after school targeted instruction which is informed by formal and informal assessments. Consequently, students are receiving focused organizational and instructional supports, including independent learning skills (be punctual, be prepared, be polite) which help to prepare them for college and careers.

- The school utilizes the Danielson Framework in frequent observations of lessons to monitor teacher effectiveness and generate feedback in order to improve instructional practices and strengthen teacher growth. (4.1)
  - As part of the new teacher performance evaluation system, all initial individual planning conferences have been completed for all teachers. The citywide focus of applying Danielson competencies into teaching practice is effectively supported through targeted professional development. Teachers learn together and from one another, as they collaborate to plan lessons and examine student work and data. New teachers receive consistent support from peer instructional coaches who currently prioritize classroom culture, procedures, and student behaviors. Twenty-four observations have been conducted by the administration up to October 2013. After an observation, teachers meet with an administrator to prepare an Individual Professional Development Log of Activities. This protocol empowers school leaders to provide each teacher with feedback that includes next steps linked to a continuum of professional learning supports that are tiered to address the unique needs of teachers, leading to a deepening of teacher practice in providing meaningful instruction. For example, students upon entry quickly begin a Do Now assignment and note-taking, as well as appropriate behavior and engagement are norms for classroom instruction. Rooms also consistently display CCLS aligned student work. Consequently, the leadership efficiently identifies pedagogical trends across subjects and classes and provide for interclass visitations, demonstration lessons, and other professional development that support teacher development.

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

- Develop consistency in curricular activities that prioritize rigorous and challenging activities and tasks to address the diverse learning needs of English language learners and students with disabilities. (1.1)
  - Across grades and content areas instruction for English language learners and students with disabilities inconsistently incorporate academic work that requires them to use rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills. Instruction in an integrated co-teaching class was teacher directed and the co-teacher wrote on chart paper without interacting with students. Student notebook entries were inconsistent, compared to notebooks in general education classes. There were opportunities for students to verbally demonstrate prior knowledge but teachers did not consistently let students respond to questions posed. Lesson and unit plans did not address the needs of English language learners and students with disabilities, as evidenced by tasks which did not require an application of a learned skill. Further, although there is recognition and concern regarding performance of the “Closing the Achievement Gap” subgroups, there was inconsistent evidence of use of student work and data in planning to refine curriculum. As a result, teachers are not effectively targeting and designing instruction as strategically as needed to intellectually involve all students in engaging learning experiences.
- Evaluate current professional development structures and develop formal opportunities for teacher teams to collaborate using an inquiry approach that results in improved performance of teachers and students. (4.2)

- Each core content area has a grade team that formally meets one time per week. Teams have just introduced protocols to guide their work and emphasis has been on curriculum implementation. As a result, while team members meet, structured professional interaction to participate in relevant action research using an inquiry approach, does not yet occur in most teams. Consequently, teams have not yet strategically planned instructional modalities best suited to meet the unique needs of students and the administration has not yet consistently reviewed the content of the work of teacher teams in using an action research to support further student development. Further, while teams have shared performance data of students to inform their work, teacher teams have not yet identified a nominally sized target population of low performing learners to carefully and systemically implement and evaluate the impact of targeted instructional change strategies. Thus instructional interventions for struggling learners are not yet reflective of inquiry based strategies and measures of student progress towards learning goals.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The Albert Einstein School	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			X				
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards?		X					
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?			X				
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels?			X				
<b>School Culture</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X				
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations?			X				
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
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				
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection?			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					
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?			X				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>