



**Department of
Education**

Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Albert Einstein Intermediate School

08X131

**588 Bolton Avenue
Bronx
NY 10473**

Principal: Monique Mason

Date of review: January 7, 2015

Lead Reviewer: Socorro Diaz

Area of Focus

The Albert Einstein Intermediate School is an intermediate school with 592 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 34% Black, 62% Hispanic, 0% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 24% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 90%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
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	Additional Findings	Proficient
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	Focus	Proficient
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	Additional Findings	Proficient
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Additional Findings	Proficient
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Celebration	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The great majority of teachers engage in structured professional collaborations during which pedagogical practice, assessment data, and student work is analyzed. These teams continually engage in distributed leadership practices

Impact

The school's professional collaboration and distributed leadership structures have strengthened the instructional capacity of teachers as well as their involvement in school decision making across the school resulting in increased student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- Instructional strategies associated with the school-wide belief that teachers must meet students where they are and that student collaboration is essential to increasing student achievement were discussed at department team meetings. Instructional practices that provide multiple entry points, supports and extensions to all students are found in math through the use of inquiry and looking at strategies to access complex text for understanding across all subject areas. For example, in a grade 7 math class, students were working on a comparing and scaling lesson, "Mixing Juices". They were challenged to compare drink recipes through an inquiry process answering a set of questions among their group members to determine which mix was the most orangey and why. In a teacher team meeting, teachers discussed how to purposely group students to ensure high levels of student engagement and how to incorporate leveled texts into their units of study to ensure access to all students.
- All teachers meet weekly during grade and department team meetings to analyze student data, review student work products, and share student academic as well as social emotional progress. In addition, multiple weekly common planning meetings are embedded into teacher's schedules to help facilitate teacher development around curriculum and teacher planning to ensure alignment with the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Teachers work collaboratively in small learning groups during prep periods or communicate through emails to discuss best practices and individual supports for specific students, who may need additional support.
- The school community seeks to improve structures that support teacher practice and students achievement. Department and grade team leaders meet once a week with the administration to review teacher and student scholarship data as well as creating a common language on a set of beliefs concerning how teachers teach effectively and how students achieve academically. Peer instructional coaches and demonstration teachers help support the teacher development thru professional development offerings and small groups' discussions. In addition, the school is supported by an outside instructional coach thru the Middle School Quality Initiative (MSQI) to support teacher development and monitoring of Reciprocal Reading.
- Professional development, school learning walks, articulation events, parent-teacher workshops and other school wide events are collaboratively planned and facilitated. Teacher leaders regularly identify best practices across classrooms and collaboratively work with the administration to share these practices during professional development.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

While reciprocal teaching was a common instructional practice across all classrooms visited including questioning and discussion, the use of strategic entry points and extensions that foster deep reasoning in student work products varies across the school.

Impact

Across classrooms, curricula extensions support students to produce meaningful work products, yet there are missed opportunities for all learners to take ownership of their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- During a math lesson in a grade 7 integrated co-teaching class, students compared ratios rotated through workstations that provided scaffold, such as teacher modeling, visuals and graphics, and hands-on learning. Teachers also provided small group instruction, the use of interactive SMART board, fraction tiles, and various math manipulatives.
- In all classrooms visited, students participated in class discussions by responding to teacher-generated questions. Students generated their own questions in only four out of the seven classroom visited.
- While conversations with students indicated that student groups were flexible and fluid, extensions to the lessons did not fully challenge all learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities. A review of the group work indicated English language learners and students with disabilities were not able to hypothesize and cite evidence from their Social studies Age of Exploration task, and were observed in a productive struggle to critique their peers' tasks.
- In a Science class, student projects on subjects such as biological and mechanical work indicated learners' understanding of these scientific topics, yet tasks did not allow students to make deeper connection between the concepts and real world application.
- A review of student portfolios in most classrooms visited revealed consistent work in argumentative writing stating a claim, counterclaim and text-based evidence, yet in-depth analysis in peer-to-peer reviews was evident in only some portfolios. Across math classrooms there was a consistent practice using an inquiry based approach to solving math problems. In addition, all students kept fluency folders where differentiated math short solving problems are kept and reviewed based on assessment data.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Academic tasks are consistently planned and refined using student work emphasizing higher-order thinking skills to allow access to curricula aligned to Common Core to all learners.

Impact

Academic tasks are regularly designed and developed based on student data outcomes to expose students to deeper levels of thinking, encouraging comprehension of curricula and cognitive engagement for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Unit plans in all content areas illustrate multiple designs of academic tasks, with numerous scaffolds and entry points for all students. For example, a seventh grade math unit on ratios and proportional relations identifies multiple differentiation strategies such as differentiated grouping and assistive technology, or identifying potential student misconceptions, such as students believing that a unit price is the price of one item. A sixth grade social studies unit of study written on Ancient River Valley Civilizations, also identifies multiple differentiation strategies as well as multiple forms of assessments that will be used throughout the unit including oral and written reports, the creation of a web site and a Document-Based Questions (DBQ) essay.
- Teachers meet once a week in department and grade team meetings to create and modify tasks to ensure they emphasize rigorous higher order thinking skills. End of unit tasks and samples of student work displayed in the hallways and found in student portfolios were aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards.
- Lesson plans are written to cognitively engage learners, requiring students to cite evidence to support a claim, analyze information, hypothesize, draw conclusions, and apply concepts to solve real-world problems. In a social studies lesson plan, students are required to cite specific textual evidence to support the analysis of primary and secondary documents. In an English language arts (ELA) lesson plan, students are required to identify a claim made by the author and evaluate the evidence that supports the claim. In a science lesson plan, students are required to hypothesize about the impact of physical traits on survival.

Findings

Teachers create assessments and use rubrics aligned to the school curricula providing students and one another with actionable feedback. Data from common assessments is used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Impact

The school's use of common assessments, data analysis and feedback allows teachers to determine student progress toward goals and adjust curricula and instruction accordingly to meet the needs of all students

Supporting Evidence

- New York City Performance Based Assessments and Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) were administered in all classrooms to determine student baselines and develop additional support classes for students. An analysis of baseline data resulted in all students receiving additional literacy interventions to support their strategic reading groups and math intervention class to help support identified skill deficiencies.
- The use of rubrics accompanied by specific targeted actionable feedback from teachers to students is beginning to be a ritual for improving student achievement across the school that the principal, teachers and students were able to speak about. Student work displayed in hallways included rubrics and targeted feedback from teachers. Students spoke to how they use rubrics in class and with homework assignments and how teachers confer with them to provide next steps. Students were also able to show samples of student work from their portfolios that included specific feedback from teachers and explain how receiving regular feedback has made them better writers.
- Common end of unit performance assessments are administered in all core subject areas and the data is used by teachers to adjust curricula and instructional strategies. An instructional adjustment made during a sixth grade teacher team meeting included, a discussion of how certain students were struggling with reading questions containing academic vocabulary. Teachers then agreed to implement the same close reading strategy and visit each other's classrooms to observe how each teacher would implement the strategy and assess its effectiveness. In addition, teachers use the information form School.net to adjust curriculum, refine instruction to revisit standards or concepts students struggled with.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

High expectations are consistently communicated to the staff via the use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching during professional development and through other forms of communication. Leadership and staff successfully communicate expectations connected to college and career readiness with families to support student progress.

Impact

Collaboration between all community stakeholders fosters ongoing communication of high expectations and accountability linked to supporting student achievement in understanding and meeting those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- During a parent meeting, parents shared how the school culture has changed in the past year. A new leadership at the school now encourages parent and families to have an active voice. Parents mentioned how teachers regularly call them to inform them of how their teens are doing in class, remind them of upcoming exam dates, alert them of missing assignments, and inform them of when their teen has outperformed expectations. Parents also spoke about the schools website where they can find information about curriculum, assignments and school wide events.
- The principal meets with staff as a group and individually to discuss school-wide and individual expectations for classroom teaching practices. Monthly professional development in all areas of the Danielson Framework for Teaching is provided collaboratively with staff and lists of “Best Practices” in all domains are collected and shared with staff to ensure coherence in understanding school wide high expectations for teaching and learning.
- A review of the school’s very detailed student and parent handbook, which was created collaboratively by the school leadership and is regularly reviewed every year to ensure relevance, clearly outlines all student and parent expectations, identifies resources and supports available to students and parents, as well as, informs parents on the multiple ways they can communicate with all staff members to discuss concerns or to set up case conferences with teacher teams.
- The school community continues to work on building a culture of teaching and learning where all stakeholders are accountable in supporting students socially and academically. The school has a strong tied with ASPIRA of New York after school programs, Mobile Response Team and the Relationship Abuse Prevention Program. The school offers seventh graders an Advisory/ College and Career Readiness period once a week. This features guidance counselors pushing -in classrooms where different topics, such as, bullying, resource, writing, high school and colleges are discussed.