



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning**

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

I.S. 068 Isaac Bildersee

Middle School K068

**956 East 82 Street
Brooklyn
NY 11236**

Principal: Merve Williams

**Date of review: January 28, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Michele Ashley**

The School Context

I.S. 068 Isaac Bildersee is a middle school with 464 students from grade 6 through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 1% Asian, 90% Black, 5% Hispanic, and 3% White students. The student body includes 15% English Language Learners and 28% students with disabilities. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 91.7%.

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	Celebration	Well Developed
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 <i>Framework for Teaching</i> , aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	Additional Findings	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	Focus	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	Additional Findings	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards, strategically integrate the instructional shifts and provide access for all learners.

Impact

Coherence across grades and subjects ensures that students are cognitively engaged and promotes college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Across grades and subjects, teachers utilize a school wide lesson plan template. The template identifies aligned Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. A science lesson on energy and simple machines is aligned to the standards for reading and writing and the New York State Learning Standard for science. The science lesson also addresses shift six, *Academic vocabulary*, with plans to introduce academic content-based vocabulary words. Vocabulary words include force, move, exert, newton, joules, and watts.
- All lesson plans reviewed also include key questions aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* domain 3b *Using questioning and discussion techniques*, Blooms Taxonomy, and Webb's *Depth of Knowledge* levels. A math lesson plan includes questions aligned to Webb's *Depth of Knowledge* Level 3 *Strategic Thinking*. For example, a question asks students to differentiate similar or congruent figures under different types of transformation. An English Language Arts (ELA) lesson asks students to cite text that "signals the reader to go beyond what is written to what is implied in the text."
- The schoolwide lesson plan template includes barriers to learning, expected misconceptions, and modifications for English Language Learners (ELL), students with disabilities, low- and higher-performing students. Teachers complete a checklist aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* domain 3b *Using questioning and discussion techniques* to ensure lesson plans are complete. A grade 8 lesson plan includes plans for the use of video for visual learners, drawings to illustrate learning for students with disabilities and tiered tasks for lower- and higher-performing students.
- Lesson plans for an integrated classroom include plans for thoughtfully planned learning groups. Students are listed by name and placed in groups with varying questions, supports, and tools. For example, Group A: Use one specific strategy in order to complete questions 3 and 4. Group B: Use another strategy to complete questions 2 and 2A, and Group C: use the third (labeled a F.U.N. strategy) in order to complete question 1. Students with individual education plan modifications as well as struggling students will complete an interactive activity on the computer pertaining to making logical inferences.
- Plans include extension activities for a variety of learners. An ELA lesson includes an extension activity where students play a "Who Am I?" game that asks students to identify a literary character and make inferences based on character traits and facts. A science lesson includes plans for extended research projects on which types of machines use the most power in the home and why.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers consistently use ongoing checks for understanding and create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. Assessment practices have yet to offer a clear portrait of student mastery.

Impact

Feedback from assessments, although actionable, has yet to provide students and teachers with meaningful information that makes students aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers use content-based rubrics to assess student work. The I.S. 68 Isaac Bildersee mathematics rubric includes four criteria for success. Criteria include conceptual understanding, computation and implementation, strategies and reasoning, and communication. Student work is assessed across four levels; level 1: far below grade level, level 2: approaching grade level, level 3: meets grade level, and level 4: exceeds grade level. A level 4 conceptual understanding states, "The student's work shows a deep understanding of the problem including the ability to identify the appropriate mathematical concepts and the information necessary for its solution. The solution completely addresses all the mathematical components presented in the task."
- Grade level data from the beginning and middle of the year provides teachers with actionable feedback to implement strategies by grade. For instance, Grade 6, 7, and 8 teachers used data to identify grade level problems of practice, conclusions, and recommendations. Grade 7 specifically identified that "students struggle with solving multi-operational problems involving rational numbers in conjunction with the rules for integer operations." Therefore, as a grade, teachers agreed to "incorporate rational numbers in all units throughout the year." Assessment data provided actionable feedback for the grade but has yet to provide a clear portrait of student mastery for individual or groups of students.
- In a social studies classroom, the teacher checked for understanding by asking students to explain the laws of the Code of Hammurabi in their own words. When a student's description was not clear, the teacher asked him to compare it to a law today. The teacher asked, "What does the law say? Explain it in your own words. What would usually happen if someone broke this same law today?" After responding to these questions, the student was able to make a comparison of the consequences of breaking the law then and now.
- In a science classroom, the teacher checked for understanding by asking clarifying questions and distributing an exit ticket. The teacher asked, "What is the expression to calculate work? What two conditions are required?" Once it was clear that students understood the components, the teacher instructed students to begin the task. At the end of the task, the teacher distributed an exit ticket that required students to calculate power and explain, "How are work and power related?" Although checks for understanding were observed across classrooms, students have yet to become aware of their next learning steps and still depend on teachers for constant guidance.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices and student work are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best.

Impact

Alignment to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and school wide beliefs has resulted in high levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leader identified a school wide focus on the instructional domain of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Across all classrooms observed, teachers shared expectations for learning orally and in written form with clearly articulated learning objectives. A learning objective in a social studies classroom stated, “Students will closely examine and evaluate several of Hammurabi’s laws and compare and contrast them with the laws and values we have in today’s society.” A learning objective in a science classroom stated, “Students will explain how work and power are related and calculate how much power is being used under specific conditions.”
- The school leader identified a school wide focus on academic vocabulary, instructional shift six. Across classrooms visited, teachers engaged students in academic vocabulary and displayed content-based vocabulary in classroom word walls. In an ELA classroom the teacher asked students to synthesize information collected on a character and noted, “This is our vocabulary word.” In a grade 6 classroom, the teacher asked a student to share what the word “sparse” means. The student shared, “little by little.” The teacher then asked the student to explain what sparse means in the context of his text. The student then shared “He sent not too many letters.”
- Across classrooms observed, students were engaged in high levels of thinking. In a dual language classroom, students worked as partners to conduct an investigation of potential and kinetic energy. Students collected materials and followed instructions written in Haitian Creole to conduct the experiment. In pairs, students set up the experiment, conducted trials, and discussed the results in Creole.
- In the vast majority of classrooms visited, teachers used varied grouping and graphic organizers to engage all students in the learning activities. In an ELA classroom, students worked in small groups to discuss the text *Zebra* and identify the main idea. To support the discussion, students used a graphic organizer and text evidence to identify the main character, what they wanted, the conflict, and possible solutions. One student used the text to share with her group that “Adam and Zebra are the same person.” The student notes, “In the text it says his name is Adam...Zebrin but they call him Zebra.”
- In a grade 6 classroom, one student group was engaged in discussion, a second group was completing a group chart, a third group was working directly with the teacher, and a fourth group was working independently on computers. Students in each group clearly articulated the purpose of their activity and the usefulness of their graphic organizer. One student stated, “The FUN strategy helps you find the right answers in the passage.” Another student reminded his group, “Before everything restate the question.”

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations and provide training to the entire staff. Teacher teams and staff consistently communicate high expectations and guidance for all students.

Impact

Consistent communication of high expectations and support prepares students for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders share high expectations in faculty conferences, emails, memorandums, one-on-one conferences, and professional development Mondays. Teachers also engage in lesson studies where they prepare, refine, and observe lessons in a six-week cycle. The school leader ensures that this work meets expectations by observing lesson studies, reviewing lesson study artifacts, and implementing norms and protocols. Lesson studies utilize a lesson refining protocol and adhere to norms for debriefing sessions with defined expectations for teachers receiving and providing feedback.
- Teachers shared during the teacher meeting that they engage in regular professional development to support the expectations for learning. Session one of a 2015-2016 mathematics lesson study includes session goals and teacher accountability for required materials. One goal states, “Develop a shared understanding of what mathematical reasoning and thinking looks and feels like in classrooms.” A second goal states that teachers will, “Establish the mindsets students hold about mathematics that inhibit their success and determine the cultural norms that must be in place to undo these beliefs.”
- The Leader in Me project has been implemented school wide and is used by teachers and staff to communicate high expectations for all students. The school has embedded the philosophy of *The 7 Habits of Highly Successful People* throughout the learning community. The Seven Habits are posted in every classroom visited, aligned to the components of all lesson plans collected, and linked to the objectives and activities shared with students during instruction. A classroom chart links each lesson component to its corresponding habit. The chart aligns the learning objective to habit two, “Begin with the End in Mind” and the mini lesson to habit five, “Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood.”
- School leaders and teachers share grade level expectations with students during assemblies. Grade 5 and 6 students attend transition assemblies where teachers and staff share the expectations for middle school. Grade 7 students attend assemblies on high school and the high school application process. Eighth grade assemblies cover the high school application process and key dates to meet all deadlines. A grade 7 student shared, “They let us know that this grade is the grade they are looking at, we have to build that up.”
- The school has partnered with Long Island University to place grade 8 students in its *Gear Up* College and Career Readiness program. *Gear Up* works with grade 8 students and their families to provide activities that address academic performance, perseverance, graduation from high school, and preparedness for college. Through this program, grade 8 students visit college campuses and experience the expectations of college as shared by college students.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured inquiry-based collaborations and consistently analyze assessment data for students they share.

Impact

Implementation of Common Core Learning Standards and a team focus on student achievement has resulted in improved teacher practice and progress for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Each teacher’s schedule includes common planning time. Teachers meet by grade and content to create common plans, align lesson content to standards, and revise plans to increase the level of rigor. Notes from a grade 7 team meeting show revisions to teacher plans that incorporate the Academic Vocabulary Routine (AVR) practiced in a lesson study.
- Grade or content teams meet twice a week. Each team has a leader, meeting agenda and academic focus. During the math team meeting the team leader presented unit two math assessment data to the team. This data was also available on the school database. A structure was in place to review the data by class and by grade. Team members also uploaded notes and findings to the school database during the meeting.
- The mathematics team met to analyze student performance on the unit two math assessment. Teachers reviewed the results from the multiple-choice section and looked for trends. After identifying questions that the majority of students answered incorrectly, they selected one for a question study. Teachers identified possible misconceptions to be addressed in future lessons, including the use of a bar graph and the wordiness of the problem. An analysis of the data also revealed that a targeted group of ELLs made significant progress and had the highest average performance for the unit.
- During a teacher meeting, teachers shared the impact that teacher teamwork has had on their teaching practice. One teacher shared that a colleague demonstrated a new way to solve two-step equations, which he now shares with his students. Students in his classes benefit from the second method when they have difficulty understanding. Another teacher shared that the use of the R.A.C.E. (Restate, Answer, Cite and Explain) strategy began in the ELA department and is now a resource across grades and content areas. A colleague added that the use of the R.A.C.E. strategy has improved student writing overall as evidenced in the Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) data.
- School leadership states that teacher capacity has increased as evidence by classroom observations and observations of team meetings. According to leader observations, teachers have increased in their use of school supported best practices such as questioning and the use of academic vocabulary and teacher team conversations are richer.