



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2015-2016**

**P.S. 099 Isaac Asimov**

**Elementary-Middle School K099**

**1120 East 10 Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11230**

**Principal: Gregory Pirraglia**

**Date of review: March 15, 2016  
Lead Reviewer: Michele Ashley**

## The School Context

P.S. 099 Isaac Asimov is an elementary-middle school with 888 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 40% Asian, 8% Black, 18% Hispanic, and 33% White students. The student body includes 31% English Language Learners and 14% students with disabilities. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 92.0%.

## School Quality Criteria

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

## Area of Celebration

**Quality Indicator:**

**3.4 High Expectations**

**Rating:**

**Well Developed**

### Findings

School leaders and staff successfully partner with families to support student progress. School leaders and staff establish a culture for learning and systematically communicate high expectations for all students.

### Impact

Unified expectations support student progress and ensure that students are prepared for the next level of learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- The vast majority of parents interviewed shared that they have easy access to the teachers and school leaders and there is two-way communication between the school and families. Communiques with families are effected via letters, phone calls, email, and face-to-face meetings, and staff translates verbal and written communication as needed. Parents communicate easily with the school by phone, via meetings, sending notes to teachers in their children's folders, and/or by leaving messages in teachers' mailboxes. According to parents interviewed, teachers return calls before the day is over, "usually on their break." Additionally, teachers send home weekly assessments for parents to review and sign. One parent noted that some teachers do monthly "positive check-ins," whereby they call the home of a boy and girl every month to give a positive message. Class parents also communicate and support other families to ensure they know what is happening in the school. Bilingual parents who share a common home language provide translation of information for families.
- Attendance sheets show evidence of well-attended information sessions for families. This year parents have attended workshops on the Common Core Learning Standards and grade-specific orientation sessions, to understand what is expected from students. A September 2015 information session agenda lists the topic "What are the Common Core Standards? What they mean to you and your children." The agenda also invites parents by grade to meet their children's teachers. Handouts from a parent orientation session reviewed the instructional shifts in English Language Arts (ELA) and math and shared recommendations for what parents can do at home to help support the shifts. The overview for the math section states, "To improve student learning, the college and career readiness standards in math challenge students to understand and apply concepts, not just memorize math formulas. These changes are called the shifts. The chart below shows what shifted, what you might see in your child's backpack and what you can do at home."
- Teachers share expectations for performance with individual and groups of students through conferencing. Conferencing happens daily, provides students with information on their performance, and sets goals for the next level of learning. A grade 7 student shared that teachers meet with all students about their work and push students hard to do their best. Staff members also have systems in place to inform students about colleges and careers. The school hosts career days on which community members and former students share their current career paths. The school also hosts a college day in which staff and students dress in college shirts and share information on the represented college. Students from kindergarten through grade 8 make college visits to City Universities of New York (CUNY). This year students will visit four CUNY campuses.

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
---------------------------	---	----------------	-------------------

### Findings

Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share and distributive leadership structures are in place so that teachers have built capacity around leadership practices and have a voice in key decisions.

### Impact

Although teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data they have not yet fully systemized the process of looking at student work.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers participate on a variety of teams including the leadership cabinet, Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) team, Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), School Implementation Team (SIT), School Leadership Team (SLT), and inquiry teams on every grade level. Grade level inquiry teams meet weekly and analyze data for targeted students based on their performance on benchmark, performance, and portfolio assessments. Teachers interviewed shared that this collaboration has allowed them to reflect on their practice and its impact on students across the grades and to incorporate new ideas from team members into their daily practice. One teacher shared that he was shying away from parts of the curriculum that provide tiered materials for students. After a teammate's demonstration of the usefulness of these tiered materials, he now uses them consistently to provide targeted support for groups of students.
- P.S. 099's Instructional Leadership Team takes on extensive roles. Teachers provide support for colleagues as mentor teachers, as teacher leaders and teacher liaisons. Mentor teachers provide instructional support and professional development for new teachers. Teacher liaisons, one for each grade from kindergarten to grade 6, and two liaisons assigned to the middle school, function as thought partners, and provide opportunities for intervisitations. Additionally, ILT members lead study groups, facilitate in-house professional development sessions, and provide teacher voice in the selection of curricula, the Student Transcript and Academic Recording System (STARS) and provide supplemental training on teaching strategies for English as a New Language (ENL) and students with disabilities.
- During the grade 4 inquiry team meeting, a teacher presented work of a targeted student, newly admitted to the school. She stated the student has low ELA scores, limited verbal skills, is persistently performing below standard, and has demonstrated limited understanding of math concepts. The teacher presented only one copy of a number of samples of the student's work. Teachers leaned in to review the samples and shared the single copies. Teachers then shared limited feedback on the student's misconceptions and began to offer possible next steps. The presenting teacher took notes on an "Analysis of Student Work" sheet. Although the team is responsible for following a "Cycle of Inquiry" protocol for looking at student work, systems were not in place to complete the process. The sharing of only one copy of the work precluded each member from annotating and deeply analyzing the work to determine "key issues or questions." Furthermore, teachers did not "develop an action plan" that identified "goals, strategies, and data collection to measure success" as required by the Cycle of Inquiry protocol.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

### Findings

School leaders and staff ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills.

### Impact

Aligned curricula build coherence across grades and content areas with rigorous tasks that promote college and career readiness for all students.

### Supporting Evidence

- All school curricula are Common Core State Standards aligned and vetted by the school leadership teams. The school utilizes *Core Knowledge* and *Expeditionary Learning* as the ELA curriculum, *Go Math* for math, *Harcourt and Glencoe* New York City Core Curriculum for science, and *Houghton Mifflin Harcourt* and *Holt* New York City Edition Core Curriculum for social studies. Teachers across grades and content areas receive ongoing professional development from curriculum consultants and Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) members on each of the content curricula.
- Across lesson plans collected there was evidence of the instructional shifts in ELA and math. Lessons included a balance of informational and literary texts, plans for text-based answers, and writing from sources, all specifically delineated in the shifts. Likewise, for math there was evidence of coherence across lessons and application of learning. A social studies lesson requires students to explain why President Jefferson was concerned about buying the Louisiana Territory from France and argue whether or not the purchase went against his beliefs. Students were asked to explain “using relevant details and knowledge of Social Studies.” A science lesson asks students to apply previous learning about simple circuits to conduct an investigation in which they will attempt to construct a simple circuit. The lesson also requires students to discuss successful and unsuccessful attempts and “draw conclusions about what is occurring” based on their knowledge of circuits.
- Across all content areas lessons and unit plans reviewed evidence that there are activities aligned to Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge* Levels 3 and 4. Plans require students to support ideas with details, design investigations, conduct experiments for a scientific problem, apply concepts in other contexts, synthesize information from multiple sources, and describe and illustrate how complex themes are found across texts. An ELA lesson on *Of Mice and Men* states, “Loneliness is also a theme in *Unbroken*. Explain how Louie’s loneliness compares and contrasts with Candy’s.” Students are also required to use specific dialogue and examples from the text. A science lesson plans for students to investigate how a virus duplicates itself and spreads to other hosts. Students conduct research in small groups to determine how varieties of viruses duplicate and spread, as well as ways to prevent contracting the virus.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
---------------------------	---------------------	----------------	-------------------

### Findings

Teaching practices, student work products, and discussions, 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 the instructional shifts lead to high levels of student thinking and participation in most classrooms.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school leader expressed that classrooms reflect a core belief that students should be engaged in learning and that this year the school's instructional focus is aligned to Danielson *Framework for Teaching* Domain 3c, Engaging Students in Learning. To achieve this goal the school emphasizes a three part instructional model including a mini-lesson, group discussion, and share. Leadership shared that students are expected to explain their thinking and be engaged in hands-on investigations of learning. The three-part model of instruction and opportunities for discussion and investigation were observed across classrooms visited. In an ELA classroom students read each other's writing and discussed ways their classmate might improve their writing. One student received a recommendation to explain his quotes so the reader knows what he means.
- Across classrooms visited students were engaged in the learning process and had opportunities to discuss their learning with classmates. In a science classroom students participated in an investigation of the spread of viruses. Five students were "secret carriers" of the virus. As students moved to their group stations the secret carriers shook hands with several classmates on their ways to their seats. The teacher then identified the secret carriers and asked all students who had shaken hands with those students to stand. Through this hands-on activity the teacher demonstrated how easily and quickly a virus with this method of transmission can travel. Students also engaged in a discussion of how the spread of viruses might be prevented.
- Across classrooms visited students were engaged in discussions and had opportunities to share their thinking with peers, in small groups or with the whole class. Students were prompted to engage in high level of thinking with questions that asked them to explain their thinking and defend their arguments with evidence. Students in a social studies classroom created a group response to explain why they believe that Thomas Jefferson went against his own beliefs by purchasing Louisiana. One group member shared, "He believed in the constructivist view. We should explain that the purchase would make the United States bigger which would increase the size of the government." A second student agreed and the group began to look for evidence to support the group's written response.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-----------------------

### Findings

The vast majority of teachers use assessments and rubrics that align to the schools curricula and offer a clear portrait of student mastery. Classrooms reflect the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding and teachers make effective adjustments to meet the needs of all students.

### Impact

Assessment practices provide meaningful feedback to students and teachers so that students are aware of their next learning steps.

### Supporting Evidence

- The vast majority of work reviewed in student portfolios includes content and standard-aligned rubrics. Rubrics use a four-point scale and teachers provide feedback on skills assessed relative to each level. A Linear Functions Rubric assesses performance on linear functions concepts, equations, neatness, and organization. A writing rubric from Sources Evaluation Rubric assesses content and analysis, command of evidence, coherence, organization, and style.
- The vast majority of teachers supplement rubrics with written feedback that further clarifies students' levels of mastery and provides targeted next steps for individual students. Teacher feedback on an ELA assignment states, "You used transitional words to show an event sequence. Next time you must indent each new paragraph." Teacher feedback on a math assignment states, "I like the way you made sense of the questions and created correct models. Next time check your work to avoid minor mathematical errors."
- Students interviewed clearly articulated their strengths and next steps for learning based on rubrics and/or teacher feedback that they receive all or most of the time on their assignments. One student stated, "This is one of my best pieces because I used textual evidence, it was organized, and I explained the theme. Next time I will review my work for spelling and capitals." Another student stated that her work was strong because it was organized, included details, and shared information in her own words. She added that next time she would include labels on her diagrams and use vocabulary that is more complex.
- Across classrooms visited, teachers used a variety of methods to check student understanding including questioning, peer- and self-assessment, conferencing, and exit tickets. During a multiplying fractions lesson, the teacher checked for student understanding and adjusted his instruction to meet the needs of a small group. The teacher conducted an on the spot mini-lesson and demonstration using shaded circle models on a sheet of paper. The teacher then asked students in the small group to draw a model of one half multiplied by three and explain their models. After students explained, the teacher gave the students another problem and checked their models before moving to a different group. A science lesson included a self-assessment sheet that asked students to assess themselves using the following reflective statements, "I followed the directions for this investigation. I was careful about touching the bare end of each wire. I used my notes to record data about the correct way to light the bulb. I worked well in the group and participated in the group discussion."