



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Asher Levy School

Public School 19

**185 1st Avenue
New York
NY 10003**

Principal: Ivan Kushner

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Reviewer: George Wallace

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Asher Levy School has 311 girls and boys from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The student population comprises 55% Hispanic, 22% Black, 16% Asian and others, and 6% White students. The proportion of students who are English language learners is 11%, much lower than the City average and that for similar schools. Special education students form 20% of the school population and this is well above the average for similar and City schools. The school is Title 1 eligible, with 61.5% of students qualifying, which is below the average for similar and City-wide schools, having dropped significantly in recent years.

The school's enrollment has been falling over the last few years at the same time as the profile of students has been changing. Attendance is marginally below the average for similar and City schools at 91%. The school population is just over 60% of the total capacity for the school. The school has a full complement of teaching staff, and the principal has been in position for several years.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Teachers' planning and assessment of individual students is strong, leading to differentiated strategies being implemented to secure improvements in performance.
- Students assessed to be in greatest need are first to receive support to improve their progress and performance.
- Staffing and scheduling decisions are based on strong evaluations of individual students' performance and the nature of the program of teaching and intervention that they are most likely to require.
- Students find their lessons engaging and they like their school and their teachers.
- Staff selection is thorough and fair, and subsequent professional development is driven by the needs of students.
- The administration know their staff well and in particular their qualities as teachers.
- The school runs very smoothly and strategies to improve students' personal and social development work well in supporting academic performance.
- Teamwork and collaboration strongly support teachers' professional development and their capacity to improve students' performance.

What the school needs to improve

- Sharpen up the analysis and use of whole-school, grade and class level data so that it is possible to see at any time in the school year the level of students' success or underachievement.
- Ensure that goals set in the Comprehensive Education Plan and elsewhere are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-related.
- Improve the consistency with which teachers record information about individual students and their classes as a whole, and evaluate their progress against targets set for improvement.
- Improve the use of periodic assessment data to bring about immediate changes to strategies being used to reach the school's stated goals.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school with well-developed features.

Students and parents like their school. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The administration know the qualities of their staff very well and as such are able to ensure that strategies for teaching, and therefore support for students, are of a good quality. Teaching engages students. They like the workshop model that is consistently employed in all teaching, in which work is closely differentiated to match individual student needs.

Teachers keep detailed records on their students through their professional assessment of their work, test outcomes and conferencing. The outcomes of discussions lead to teachers making brief notes about their students' strengths and areas for improvement. This is a valuable process, but the systems employed vary in quality across the school.

Staff teams work effectively to support students. The members of each team are used to gathering useful individual student data which is used well in discussions of students' needs. Priority support is given to those students in most need of improvement, and intervention strategies are employed swiftly to help remedy individual weaknesses. However, it is uncommon for data to be used other than at an individual student level, hence patterns of class or grade performance is rarely recognized. Whole-school goals are insufficiently precise. In both cases, the school recognizes that such areas are undeveloped. The school has high expectations of its students and is working in a strongly collaborative manner in their interests to secure ever higher standards.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school has a wide range of good quality data available for analysis at different levels of detail and scale. Whilst the school generates much of its own data, other statistical information is the product of various types of tests frequently used by the school. Teachers assess students on a frequent basis and outcomes are logged. This good quality data on individual students is used to good effect. For example, paired learning, group work and intervention strategies are a product of such information which is frequently updated and shows that teachers not only know their students extremely well, but are able to move students' learning forwards as a result. Comprehensive information is kept on all students, including English language learners and special education students. This data is also used very well to secure understanding of the progress such students are making and was almost certainly instrumental in the school receiving notification by the New York State about its success in 'Closing the Gap'.

However, at a whole-school level, or even at grade and class level, little detailed analysis is done to ascertain whether patterns exist and can be explained in the achievement of different groups of students. The school is aware of its level of achievement against similar schools, and its own past performance. Such analysis shows an increase in

standards in English language arts and mathematics over the past eight years, and projections of the likely results of the New York State assessments for 2007 are known. Student progress is monitored closely by teachers, although there is some inconsistency in the way this information is logged.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student’s next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student’s learning.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The school cabinet knows and understands very well the strengths and weaknesses of individual students throughout the school. The members of the cabinet gather a great deal of data and use it with teachers to successfully build programs of work, plan lessons, in particular ensuring that work is matched closely to the needs of students, and devise strategies of personal support. Teachers’ assessments, especially through formal teacher-student conferencing, ensure that students are made aware of what they do well, and what they need to work on. However, it is rare to see any statements from teachers indicating that such targets have been evaluated, nor is there consistency in the way they record their findings.

While whole-school goals are set, they are insufficiently precise to enable progress to be measured or their levels of success evaluated with any accuracy. Teachers, for the most part, are not aware of all of the goals set. However, the quality of information about individual students, arising from frequent standardized testing and teacher assessments, is good and ensures that student goals are more readily set and closely monitored.

School leaders and faculty ensure that priority of support is given to those students who have the greatest learning needs. Teachers have high expectations and students know that they have to concentrate and work hard to succeed. They feel they are challenged and the work they do makes them think. Students indicate that they receive helpful feedback about their progress. Parents are invited to provide additional information about their child and, in particular, are consulted at times when special strategies are being suggested to aid their child’s learning. The outcomes of assessment indicate areas for improvement for students, and whilst not always presented as goals, are highly relevant in teachers’ drive to secure higher standards.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

The school aligns its curriculum with the mandated curriculum that provides the school with a great deal of good quality data to support decisions about students’ learning. In addition, students receive instruction in science, social studies, gym and the use of computers. Many students receive lessons in art, music and drama, all of which are selected to enhance students’ experiences at school, and promote high expectations and improvements in performance.

Teachers work closely to improve their planning. They meet other teachers within the same grade at a set time each week which has led to improvements in the quality of planning, use of resources and instructional methodologies. Staff work collaboratively and often in teams. Teachers have a good understanding of the workshop model used throughout the school and produce a variety of different tasks to meet the needs of individuals, with students frequently working in pairs, groups, with their teacher and independently. This way of learning has meant that students show high levels of engagement in their lessons. Teachers' planning and assessment for individual students is very good. The quality of this work leads to specific strategies being agreed to help ensure improvements in performance.

Budgeting decisions consistently take into account the needs of students and work suitably well to support improvement. The school is particularly successful in giving careful attention to identifying individual student needs. This is reflected in the effective scheduling procedures and assignment of staff based on good quality evaluations of student needs.

Students feel very comfortable and safe in school because they know that staff can be approached if they have any concerns. They also know that the teachers and other staff know them, and they feel respected as individuals whose best interests are being served at school. Procedures for following up absence are proficient but have not been successful in increasing levels of attendance.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

A core appointments panel serves to select new staff. The process is thorough, fair and well developed. The appointments panel seeks to secure information to determine that applicants are team players and have high expectations of students. They also try to ensure that they know whether prospective teachers have the capacity to diagnostically assess students and use data to further their progress.

Professional development is well managed. It has a focus on professional needs and priorities for accelerating student progress. Much development is school-based, principally using the expertise of the two coaches and the academic intervention specialist. When staff attend external courses they have a remit to summarize and report back key features of the course so that all staff gain in knowledge and understanding. A range of good quality forums exists in school, drawing teachers together to share and develop the way they work and to evaluate the effectiveness of new initiatives. As such there is a strong team culture and strong commitment to use information in an effective way to support and improve student performance.

The principal and assistant principal frequently observe instruction and feed back their findings to teachers. They know their staff very well and in particular their qualities as professionals. The outcomes of these findings, together with peer observations, grade meetings, cabinet and team meetings, are all focused on raising students' performance. Staff work in a strong collaborative way and strategies for improvement of student performance are central to their work. The principal is respected and the school's potential for further improvement is good. The school runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis. There are well-developed programs of after-school support involving community-based

organizations. Strong links exist between private business and the school in terms of hard resources and personnel who visit the school, for example as mentors for reading and writing.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school has suitably detailed systems to indicate the nature of support, and changes needed to aid students' progress. Teacher assessments and, in particular, a recently introduced test taken four times yearly provide useful diagnostic information upon which teachers base their planning. However, data is mainly looked at by teachers on an individual student basis and therefore any evaluation of success in students achieving their goals, if set, is also at an individual level.

Goal-setting is not well developed at whole-school level, nor sufficiently consistent between teachers. Goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan and other plans are not specific, measurable, achievable, relevant or time-related which makes robust monitoring and evaluation difficult and limits the school's ability to determine whether modifications are needed.

The level of support individual students receive is high, and where changes in strategies for improvement are required swift action is taken. The administration, teachers and other staff are flexible in their approach to their work. When necessary, the realignment of approaches to teaching or acquisition of new resources are swiftly acted upon. The focus of the school's work is in the pursuit of developing students' interest in learning, and in support of improving students' personal and social development, as well as their academic standards.

Grade level meetings are used by teachers and the administration to discuss student progress and, if necessary, to revise teaching plans. The monitoring of outcomes across each class is relatively new. Although informal meetings throughout the school are frequent, the less frequent formal meetings provide valuable time for staff to discuss issues that directly affect students' performance. In some meetings, staff discuss individual students, their position in school and how to provide support to help them make progress.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Asher Levy School (PS 19)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score		X	

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each student, classroom, grade level, 		X	
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 		X	
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all other categories of interest to the school* 		X	
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.	X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 1		X	

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.	X		
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.		X	
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.		X	
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2		X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.		X	
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.			X
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.		X	
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.	X		
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.	X		
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X	