



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Asher Levy School

Elementary School 19

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

Principal: Ivan Kushner

Dates of review: March 19 - 20, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Clive Parsons

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Asher Levy is an elementary school with 334 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 22.6% Black, 55.6% Hispanic, 5.7% White, 12.3% Asian, and 0.1% American Indian students, with 3.6% of students from other ethnic backgrounds. The student body includes 12.6% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 -2007 was 91.5%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 61% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal sets a positive and nurturing tone for the building, which staff and students pick up and enact in their daily work.
- The administrators are effectively building the capacity of the school to continue to improve through empowering staff to take responsibility and involve themselves in decision making.
- Teachers work very effectively in a collaborative and supportive way to improve student outcomes in their class and across the school.
- Teachers are provided with data about the specific learning strengths and development needs of their students in clear and accessible ways, so that they are differentiating their instruction even more effectively.
- There is a very good sense of continuity and progression, with key strategies and expectations consistently exhibited and building through the grades.
- There is a good sense of the school building systematically on previous developments, so that momentum and direction are maintained.
- Teachers are receiving very good professional development, including from the school's coaches, as well as from their peers.
- Classroom relationships are very strong, with students working collaboratively and supportively in small groups.
- Students behave well and engage willingly, often with real enjoyment, in the learning being organized by their teachers.
- Parents are very appreciative of the openness of the school and the very good rapport with teachers which underpins their frequent discussions about their child's progress and learning needs.

What the school needs to improve

- Introduce more opportunities to identify interim goals for students, to provide more frequent formal evaluations of individual and whole school progress.
- Ensure that interim data is formally evaluated for trends and patterns that cover all student groups.
- Articulate whole-school goals over the longer-term, with specific interim goals to act as milestones along the route.
- Apply the same evaluation techniques now being applied to academic data to attendance, to identify patterns and trends to aid further improvement.
- Continue to build the capacity of the school, through focused professional development and the extending of responsibility and leadership among the staff.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

At the time of the previous Quality Review, the school was considered to be collecting much data about individual students, but not using it sufficiently to drive school-wide improvements. Since that time, the principal has acted swiftly and successfully to introduce new systems and expectations, which are enabling a much clearer view of the performance and progress of classes and grades, as well as other student groups. The areas for improvement within this report look to the school strengthening further these developments, including goal setting, and formalizing a longer-term strategic plan to support their implementation. Attendance has been rising, because of the rigor with which families are contacted about absence and tardiness, as well because students enjoy being at school. However, the school has yet to explore attendance data with the same rigor that is being applied to academic data.

The strengths of the school that were highlighted at the time of the previous review have been maintained, if not strengthened further. There is tremendous consistency to much of the school's work. There is clarity as to when and where skills and routines are best introduced to maximize student capabilities. Expectations of the youngest children are very high and they develop their skills and understanding rapidly, producing a very firm base for future work. The administrators seek out the ideas and opinions of staff, so that they feel empowered and involved. Teachers have embraced the new expectations and data systems willingly, seeing the inherent benefits for their students. They are taking ownership of the data, and using it very effectively to ask questions of themselves and their colleagues. The school's data specialist has supported this work very well, particularly by the production of visual and easily understood charts. The school's inquiry team has been exploring differences in the performance and progress of boys and girls. Teacher mentors have also been working with identified students to help them set and achieve specific goals.

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 the student's progress over time.

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

Teachers regularly assess student performance. Predictive and instructionally targeted assessments have been introduced and these are supported by other strategies such as

running records. Very strong teacher collaboration, effectively supported by the school's coaches and data specialist, ensures a consistent interpretation of student work. Teachers maintain comprehensive records of their assessments, as well as a range of student work samples. In this way, teachers have a very good understanding of the performance and progress of each student, including English language learners and special education students. Assessment binders have been made easier to manage this year, and 'at a glance' sheets provide an easy overview of the performance and progress of individual students, as well as classes as a whole. Grade trends, strengths and development areas are identified through frequent discussions between teachers and with the administration.

Detailed evaluation of the outcomes of tests and periodic assessments in grades 3 to 5 has significantly strengthened the detailed knowledge that teachers have of each student, class and grade. Easy to interpret charts are enabling teachers to differentiate their instruction more specifically, by identifying common needs of students within the class for targeted support, intervention or acceleration. Comparison of data between classes is enabling grade teams to identify most effective practice within the team, and then spread it more widely. The school's inquiry team is investigating differences in the outcomes of boys and girls. The principal is aware of the relative performance of students with different ethnic backgrounds, although this level of analysis is not yet consistently carried through, at each benchmark for example. The principal tracks overall performance over time, as well as that of other schools locally and those in the school's peer group. Reasons for differences are analyzed to identify future areas and goals for improvement. Teachers have been provided with good support in understanding and using the new data systems and this is on-going through their common planning time.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

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

Effective collaborative activity is leading to a strong sense of common purpose throughout the school. The administration involves staff and parents well in making plans for improvement and in formulating strategies for their implementation. There is a general sense of where the school is headed over the next few years. This direction is supported by specific shorter-term goals, some of which are readily measurable. The significant progress made in data analysis and evaluation is enabling the school to establish more focused and specific school-wide goals for student achievement. However, the school has yet to formalize and articulate measurable whole-school goals over the longer-term, with specific interim goals identified to act as milestones and checkpoints along the route.

Goal setting for grades, classes and individual students is now more firmly established. For example, interim and annual reading goals are used to ensure that students are making the progress expected. Students know their reading levels and are able to state the level they are aiming for. Diagnostic tests are used to identify common deficiencies across a class or grade and to target individual students or small groups for greater support or intervention. Students feel that they receive good feedback from their teachers, which gives them a good understanding of the quality of their work and what

they could do to improve it. The learning needs of individual students are very well known, ensuring that those needing the most improvement are supported well. Effective intervention is provided through a variety of strategies, including morning tutoring, as well as push-in and pull-out support as appropriate. The school's high expectations for both academic and personal growth are consistently evident throughout its work. Parents are very appreciative of the openness and accessibility of the school. The very good rapport with teachers underpins frequent discussions with staff about their child's progress and learning needs. In addition to the usual home-school communication, the school has introduced a mid-year parent reflection to enable parents to evaluate their child's progress and provide the school with focus areas for additional attention.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

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

There is a very good sense of continuity and progression throughout the school. Key learning strategies and expectations are exhibited and build progressively through the grades. For example, students routinely use accountable talk stems in everyday discussions. The implementation of the workshop model is supporting flexible groupings and on-going data analysis very well. Students appreciate the variety of opportunities available to them, especially the hands-on experiences through art and science, as well as the physical activity through gym. The school also provides good opportunities for music, including partnership with a local music school. Teachers are using the data available to understand the specific learning strengths and development needs of their students. Teachers are differentiating their instruction even more effectively as a result, using flexible student groupings to good effect.

The principal sets a positive and nurturing tone for the building, which staff and students pick up and enact in their daily work. Classroom relationships are very strong, with students working collaboratively and supportively in small groups, sometimes with students from other classes or grades. Students behave well and engage willingly, often with real enjoyment, in the learning being orchestrated by their teachers. The principal budgets carefully, in order to ensure that planned developments can be implemented successfully. In addition, he strives to ensure that resource needs identified through the year in response to data are accommodated wherever possible. There is an improving trend to the school's attendance and the principal has targeted the need for further improvement in this area. However, the school has yet to apply the same evaluation techniques now being applied to academic data to attendance, so as to identify patterns and trends to aid further improvement.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

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

The principal and the assistant principal have a good understanding of the quality of learning within individual classrooms, as well as across the school as a whole. This is

as a result of frequent, informal visits to classrooms, as well as the evaluation of student achievement data. This knowledge is used very effectively to provide individualized support and guidance, as well as school-wide professional development. As a result, teachers receive very good professional development from a wide variety of sources, including from the school's coaches, as well as from external consultants. Teachers use their available common planning time very effectively to review and evaluate the impact of their work, as well as planning ahead. Data analysis and the evaluation of student work are integral to these sessions. Teachers are taking ownership of the data, so that they are identifying strengths and development areas in their own skills, as well as that of their peers. This is enabling the most effective learning strategies to spread more widely throughout the team. The nurturing and collaborative climate instigated by the principal ensures that teachers new to the building or to the profession are effectively inducted and supported. Regular meetings and planning sessions are provided with mentor teachers, as well as opportunities to observe model lessons with other teachers or coaches.

The administrators are effectively building the capacity of the school to continue to improve through empowering staff to take responsibility and to involve themselves in decision making. The principal has well-considered plans to extend this further through, for example, the establishment of lead teachers. The school runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis, with everyone knowing what is expected of them and working consistently to achieve the best outcomes for students. Student support services are used effectively, building on the holistic view that the school has of students. Effective external partnerships support this work as well as providing additional learning opportunities for students.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The increased availability of data is enabling the school to be more specific about the goals being established for students and teachers, as well as school-wide. There are interim, as well as end of year goals, in addition to set points for interim or diagnostic assessments. However, the principal has identified that setting one or two additional interim goals has the potential to drive improvements more strongly. Further, while the outcomes of periodic assessments are evaluated for individual students, classes and grades, the performance and progress of all student groups are not yet evaluated consistently. This will become increasingly possible as the school collects more data, over longer periods, to look for trends and patterns.

Teachers are effectively using the outcomes of the periodic assessments to meet the needs of individual students, as well as for small groups or the class as a whole. The administrators are using the same outcomes to focus and target resources, as well as to adapt and modify aspects of the school's work where necessary. There is a very good sense of the school building systematically on previous developments, so that momentum and direction are maintained, with a sense of continual, steady and sustainable improvement. This work is being strengthened through the increasing availability of meaningful student achievement data. There is a shared vision for the future, although this has yet to be formally articulated in longer-term planning and goals.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Asher Levy School	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
Quality Score				X	

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

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?			X		
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?				X	
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X	

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?			X		
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?			X		
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?				X	
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?				X	
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.					
To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?				X	
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4					X

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.					
To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?				X	
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?				X	
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?			X		
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?				X	
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 5					X

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped