



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**Tri-Community School**

**Junior High School 231**

**145-00 Springfield Blvd  
Queens  
NY 11413**

**Principal: Emmanuel Lubin**

**Dates of review: December 4 - 6, 2006**

**Reviewer: Chris Andrews**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Tri-Community Junior High School serves 890 students in grades 7 and 8. The student population is 94% Black and 5% Hispanic, with the remainder White and Asian. Nine percent are special education students and English language learners account for only 1%. The school is not Title 1 eligible. Attendance at 92.5% is below the average of similar schools, but above the City average.

The principal took up the position in September 2006 and is currently evaluating the school and its culture, with a view to identifying strengths and weaknesses, and appropriate next steps for school improvement. The school has undergone some recent downsizing and currently has no grade 6, although this situation is under review. The teaching staff and student population are both very stable with low turn-over. The school is organized into academies, each overseen by one of the assistant principals to ensure that a member of the administration has a direct overview of students' progress and development.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The new principal is a strong role model who has the capacity to effect change.
- The principal's vision for the school is strongly supported by the school leadership team and the staff.
- Parents and students are very strongly committed to the school.
- The school has effective procedures in place to collect appropriate data.
- The quality of instruction and learning is monitored by a well-established pattern of class observation.
- There are examples of creative and engaging instruction in all departmental areas of the school.
- Communications between school and home are well developed and allow parents to support their children's learning effectively.
- The pupil personnel team is effective and has a clear understanding of the differing needs of students.
- There are useful partnerships with community organizations.

### What the school needs to improve

- Develop consistency in the collection of data.
- Develop systems to ensure consistent use of data by teachers to differentiate instruction.
- Plan instruction to maintain student engagement and enthusiasm in all classes.
- Align the professional development of teachers to meet their needs and those of the mandated curriculum.
- Provide regular opportunities for peer observation by teachers, in particular to allow them to see good practice on differentiated instruction.
- Develop procedures to make the Comprehensive Education Plan a living document that drives the activity of all members of the school community and implement a system to monitor and evaluate whole-school goals effectively.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a proficient school.**

In a very short time, the current principal has articulated a vision for the school with which all members of the school community can agree. The school has faced significant challenges in terms of its size and its overall performance, but there is a very strong commitment to improvement among teachers, students and parents on which the principal knows he can rely. He is determined to improve existing systems and procedures to make them more effective and also to involve teachers and parents more closely in planning for the school's development.

The areas identified in this report for improvement are largely issues which the school has itself identified, but which have yet to be fully planned or implemented .

At present, students are only in the school for two years but enjoy coming and respect their teachers for the work they do on their behalf. The school appreciates how critical it is that systems all work consistently to enable students to benefit as much as possible from their short time at Tri-Community School. The stability and experience of the teaching staff mean that there are well-established teams that are in a good position to support each other in implementing the changes intended by the administration.

### 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 procedures in place to collect both quantitative data from State and City tests and assessments, and qualitative data from teacher observations. In addition, data from internal tests, plus information from Kaplan, are kept in student portfolios and are available to all teachers. This range of data, with teachers' own data collected from student conferences and internal tests, is used by the administrators, grade teams and individual teachers to inform instruction and planning for all students.

The more subjective data about performance, attitudes and behavior informs the teachers' understanding of their students but there is not yet consistency in the data collected by all teachers as not all keep equally detailed individual records. For example, students who are graded as level 1 all have their own records kept by their teachers, but this is not true of other groups such as the level 4 students. There is a particular focus on the use of the data to monitor the progress of special education students, as their progress has not been rapid enough compared to that of general education students.

The administration compares test scores with those of similar schools and with the school's own past records, but the changing nature of the school has made these comparisons less reliable. There is little analysis of other groups of students, for example by ethnicity and gender to ensure that all groups of students are doing as well as they can.

**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.**

Meetings at cabinet level, at academy level and at departmental level are held to develop the curriculum in the light of data analysis. Goals for the different subject areas are quantitative ones, expressed in percentages, and differ from subject to subject. The grade 8 goals are informed by the test data from grade 7, while grade 7 goals emerge from the classroom data as there is no data from previous schools for these students. The monitoring of progress is on-going but the school does not yet have the systems to ensure consistent use of data by teachers.

Some teachers demonstrate a very clear understanding of the data and its implications for setting goals to meet the needs of individual needs of students. This is reflected in how students are grouped in the classroom, or in the differentiated tasks given to students. Students with low test scores, especially students at risk, are referred to the academic intervention service or to the pupil personnel team if the issue is behavioral or emotional. Support for these students is well organized and the impact of that support is clear. The pupil personnel team is particularly effective and has a clear understanding of how to address the differing needs of students.

Communications between school and home are well developed and enable parents to support their children’s learning effectively. Parents are kept informed of the school’s high expectations. Parents and students alike are clear as to these expectations in terms of behavior, dress, attendance and, above all, academic performance. Parents are encouraged to share in developing their children’s learning through workshops held by the school on areas of the curriculum and through conferences, three times a year, where they can discuss their children’s progress in depth. These meetings also allow staff, students and parents to share and review goals for the students.

**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 proficient with well-developed features.**

The school follows the mandated curriculum and has chosen ‘America’s Choice’ programs which use the workshop approach, although not all teachers are supportive of this program. The school has chosen to invest in the Kaplan system so as to provide a structure of assessment to support this curriculum model. The system replicates the State tests to develop student familiarity with test formats to build confidence.

There is an expectation that teachers will differentiate instruction within the classroom, but this is not always achieved because of inconsistent use of data analysis by teachers. As a result, not all students’ needs are met well. This is an area for development recognized by the administrators who see it as central to raising the performance of individuals as well as the school as a whole.

The recent investment in a range of programs provides evidence of the budget being used creatively to enhance the learning of students as a result of analyzing data. Staffing and

scheduling decisions are driven by analysis, with focus on the core areas of English language arts, mathematics and science. Some areas, such as art and music, have not had full-time staffing because of funding issues, but the principal has plans to address this area in the future.

There are examples of creative and engaging instruction in all subject areas, but not in every classroom. Inconsistent approaches to the structuring of instruction mean that student engagement and enthusiasm are not always maintained. Students clearly enjoy many classes but are clear that interactive instruction is critical for their engagement. Behavior throughout the school is very good, and all students feel that there is someone to whom they can turn if any problems arise. The systems for pursuing absences are robust and well known to students and parents, although attendance remains below the average for similar schools.

**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 proficient.**

There are robust procedures for hiring new staff. Commitment to excellence, to the school's mission statement and to being a strong professional role model for the students is as important in the school's opinion as proficiency with data. Teachers are therefore encouraged to model exemplary professional behavior. However, the school does not yet fully align the professional development of teachers to meet their needs and to ensure their ability to teach the mandated curriculum.

Although increasing teachers' understanding of the use of data is a regular feature of professional development, departmental and faculty meetings have also developed a major focus on instruction and on the delivery of the curriculum. This allows colleagues to share their own training and helps offset the fact that the school does not yet provide enough opportunities for peer observation, in particular in respect to differentiated instruction. The literacy and mathematics coaches are regularly observed by their colleagues and share in collaborative teaching. The quality of instruction and learning is monitored by a well-established pattern of classroom observation, carried out by the principal and the four assistant principals. Walkthroughs occur on a daily basis, leading to feedback that teachers find helpful. Walkthroughs are also the main mechanism used to measure the impact of professional development.

The new principal is a strong role model who is seen as having the capacity to effect change. His vision for the school is strongly supported by the school leadership team and the teachers. School procedures are well established, and transitions between classes and dismissal, for example, are very well managed. There are good and growing links with community organizations which help achieve some of the school's less tangible goals, such building student confidence and self-esteem, through sports, drama and dance.

**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 undeveloped.**

There is not yet a fully-established system in place to monitor and evaluate whole-school goals effectively. The Comprehensive Education Plan has historically not been a collaborative document but the new principal has determined that there will be a more shared approach so that ownership of the school's development plan is shared by the school community. This process is currently overseen by an assistant principal who shares the principal's vision.

The senior leadership team meets bi-monthly and has indicated an intention to develop further its monitoring of the Comprehensive Education Plan to ensure that the budget is fully aligned with the needs identified in the plan and that goals are met. This is a work in progress and the senior leadership team also accepts that the plan is still on the way to becoming a more active and 'genuinely a whole community document'. The school does not yet make explicit enough the success criteria for some elements of the plan, nor the precise roles of monitors and evaluators.

The different academies regularly meet under the leadership of the assistant principals to review data and to evaluate plans. There is now more flexibility than in the past for revising planning or revisiting areas of the curriculum. The pacing calendar must still be closely followed, but teachers and departments are able to be creative in meeting needs identified by the tests. In each of these areas the procedures are now in place to give teachers and other staff a greater input into the whole planning cycle.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Tri-Community School (JHS 231)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		X	

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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"> <li>each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>		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"> <li>ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students*</li> </ul>		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"> <li>all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>		X	
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the schools own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.	X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>		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.

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>		X	

<b>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.</b>	Ø	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>		X	
<b>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.</b>	Ø	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>		X	
<b>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.</b>	Ø	✓	+
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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>	X		