



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Carlos Tapia School

Public School 120

**18 Beaver Street
Brooklyn
NY 11206**

Principal: Liza Caraballo

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Reviewer: Helen Donnellan

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Carlos Tapia School is a Magnet Multicultural School for Social Studies and the Arts that is located in Brooklyn. It serves 487 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. Since becoming a Magnet school the school has attracted students from across Brooklyn, which has increased the number of students enrolled. Eighty-seven percent of the students are Hispanic, 12% are Black, with the remaining 1% of students being White and American Indian. Seven percent are special education students. Thirty three percent of the students are English language learners. All students are Title 1 eligible.

The school's attendance figure is slightly above the average for similar schools and City schools and has recently increased to 93.2%.

The school uses a multi-cultural focus to raise students' awareness of global and community issues and as a basis for applying skills and knowledge learned from the mandated curriculum.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has ability in managing changes to create a purposeful and caring learning environment.
- The school conveys high expectations for all students and supports them in making progress towards their goals.
- Students are active and motivated to learn.
- The multi-cultural emphasis in the curriculum engages students and broadens the mandated curriculum.
- A wide range of data is gathered on all students, which is analyzed to give a clear picture of each student's overall progress.
- Progress is compared between classes in different grades to show differences and similarities in learning outcomes.
- Commitment to continual improvement is reflected in the way the case study from the quality review was extended to a whole school evaluation process.
- The school is a caring community where students share concerns and feel secure.
- Effective partnerships with parents have been created and sustained.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that all teachers apply and use the extensive data available to plan instruction.
- Use data consistently to identify the needs of individual students and particular groups of students.
- Ensure that goals for students align with the assessment information.
- Incorporate monitoring and evaluation into planning processes in more formal ways.
- Ensure that all feedback following classroom observations gives precise information on areas to be developed, so that staff are clear about what they need to improve.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

Since her appointment four years ago, the principal has succeeded in making the Carlos Tapia School a caring, warm and welcoming environment. The multi-cultural focus is evident from the moment of walking through the outside doors with brightly colored murals painted by the students. Student work and murals celebrate cultures and students' work in halls, stairs and classes. The school shares high expectations with the students. One described these as, "The sky's the limit and it is. We'll make it if we want to."

Collection of formal and informal data on student progress and performance is a strength of the school. Information is presented clearly but it is currently under-used by staff to set goals and inform planning. The multi-cultural approach within the curriculum appeals to students and is used well to complement mandated requirements.

The principal showed a high level of commitment to the quality review, particularly through extending the case study model process. This aligns with how she is beginning to establish structures to ensure rigor in monitoring and review across the school.

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 well developed.

The school uses a wide range of assessments to gather a full picture of each student. Great care is taken to record and follow the progress of individual students, classes and grades. The principal takes the lead in collecting, analyzing and interpreting information and providing this to teachers, so they are informed about the progress of their students. Data is presented in easy-to-read formats, so information is readily accessible to staff with varying levels of confidence in using statistical information. Data is extensively used to show the progress of special education students and English language learners. Careful scrutiny is now making staff more aware of the time these students take to acquire English. Specific intervention has been put in place to overcome under-performance of male Afro-American students, designed to support them in making accelerated progress.

The strength of the school's gathering of data lies with formal, standardized assessments. Attention is paid to informal assessment and observation records through teacher's conference notes, although these are not yet gathered as consistently as formal test data.

The school is continually seeking to refine the systems to record and analyze data, which is reflected in the recent introduction of software to compare student progress against targets and show progress made over time. This complements the existing processes in which the principal compares progress and test results for classes in each grade, to identify strengths and areas in need of review and development.

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.

Grade meetings are held regularly to plan how the curriculum will be delivered so that students can achieve their goals. Teachers work closely with students on a one-to-one basis, assessing progress and agreeing their next steps for learning. Discussions take place with some reference to assessment, to determine the content of future content of instruction and how students will be supported. However, these are not formally defined in plans and links to assessment are not always clear. Goals set for particular students do not always align with assessment information, as teachers are not yet making full use of the information available to them. This can lead to insufficient challenge for higher-achieving students and inappropriate tasks for others.

The students are aware of high expectations and are well supported in aspiring to achieve them. The school pays particular attention to those students who are in greatest need of improvement. They are clear about what they have to learn, why it is important and strategies for learning. One student said, “(teachers) show you how to get the answer, not just tell you it.” The school continually encourages parents to be involved in school life and support their children in learning at home. Commitment to work with parents is seen in the after school computer program for parents; where they gain computer skills and model learning to the students. Workshops on curriculum content are held at varying time of the day and at weekends to increase the numbers of parents able to attend. Family mathematics nights give whole families a light-hearted and meaningful experience of learning through games in each class. Curriculum days are held annually and give parents an overview of the curriculum for the coming year, supplemented by information on individual students shared with their parents through one to one conferences.

The multi-cultural program demonstrates effective working partnerships with other professionals and organizations which enhance and enrich the curriculum. Through this approach students have greater knowledge of the world and are well informed of many global issues. The range of activities and subject material engages the interest of students from all grades appropriately.

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.

The school uses the multi-cultural focus well to provide opportunities for students to learn new knowledge and skills and gain understanding of global issues. This is carefully planned so that the mandated curriculum is enhanced, not diminished by this focus. The after-school program provides further opportunities in which students develop wider knowledge through chorus, sport and fitness, poetry, fashion and design, recorder and chess. The school takes account of students’ interests and backgrounds in planning instruction through considered use of materials and books in different languages.

The school has started to use data to group students for reading, to provide improve differentiated instruction and is carefully evaluating the students’ progress in these classes.

In self-contained classes for special education students informal and standardized assessments are well-used to provide instruction that enables all students to progress. Some teachers have low confidence in applying data, which limits its use in differentiating instruction in some general education classes.

The school makes excellent use of additional funding through the Magnet program to enhance the mandated curriculum in ways that appeal to students. The principal takes care to consider staff strengths in managing behavior and instruction, when allocating students to particular classes. Time is well allocated so that the mandated curriculum is provided for all classes.

Materials to support English language learners are carefully chosen to match the students' needs, enabling them to access the curriculum and be active in their learning. Students place great value on the content of explicitly taught information, as well as being given strategies to support their learning.

The school is a caring community where students share concerns and feel secure. They are confident that staff will resolve concerns and problems shared with them; one said "The solving is good." Students take responsibility for agreeing rules within their classes, to align with the overall school behavior code and they understand the consequences of not adhering to their rules. Teachers use a positive behavior approach, which adds to students feeling secure at the school.

Attendance is increasing at a modest rate, with prompt contact to parents when students are absent. Incentives encourage students to achieve high 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 proficient.

The principal provides strong, clear leadership to staff, students and parents with a clear focus on high expectations and continual improvement.

During the recruitment process she makes clear her expectation that teachers will gather and apply data and, through questioning, explores how they apply data to help students to make progress.

The content of professional development is determined by common issues arising from observations and teachers' perceptions of their needs. Specific development on accessing data through on-line sources has been provided for staff, as part of the strategy to embed the use of data across the school. Whilst teachers attend professional development there is no monitoring to verify changes as a result of this.

Informal and formal classroom observations are routine in the school, with a structure for conferences before and after each. As the written feedback teachers receive is not always sufficiently precise, teachers are unclear about actions to take and monitoring their progress is difficult as a result. Expertise and good practice is shared informally amongst established teachers, in contrast to the formal mentor and buddy approach for new teachers. Inter-visitations were used well to support teachers' learning during the introduction of the workshop model for writing.

The principal has instigated and managed changes which have led to a purposeful and caring learning environment. She knows students well and is well respected by parents, staff and students.

There is a sense of purposeful activity within the school and students follow agreed protocols for behavior. The principal sets a good example of not making a drama out of a crisis, so that issues are dealt with discretely and effectively.

The positive impact of the multi-cultural programs on student learning is shown through improved test results since the introduction of the program. External agencies are effective in supporting instruction and complementing the resources within the school, so that students receive exciting and varied curriculum content.

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 commitment to reflect and improve is a growing part of the school's way of working, with a strong lead from the principal. She recognized the value of the case study from the quality review, with every class teacher identifying and tracking two students to highlight the effectiveness of assessment and intervention. Monitoring and evaluation of plans is carried out informally and lacks cohesive structure. However, the goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan are reviewed systematically three times each year, which ensures that progress is being made in relation to them. Each of the goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan is broken down into a separate action plan, with actions clearly defined so that administration and staff know goals and related actions. .

Comparisons of student progress are used to some extent to monitor the effectiveness of interventions, with the use of data being led by the principal. Not all teachers show confidence in applying data to monitor the progress of plans, which limits the monitoring process.

The cabinet wastes no time in addressing areas where little or no progress is being made and changes are made to support improvement. The principal's analyses of data are interrogated further by the cabinet, discussed with staff and changes made promptly to improve academic outcomes.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Carlos Tapia School (PS 120)	∅	✓	+
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	