



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Arturo Toscanini Public School

Public School 216

**350 Avenue X
Brooklyn
NY 11223**

Principal: Celia Kaplinsky

Dates of review: December 13 – 14, 2006

Reviewer: Helenmary Stark

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall evaluation

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

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Arturo Toscanini School has 445 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. It serves a population of 56% White, 21% Asian/Pacific Islander, 16% Hispanic and 8% Black students. Special education students number 18% and there are 15% English language learners. The school is in receipt of Title I funding. The school is a region 7 high performing gap closing school exempt from the mandated curriculum. Attendance, at around 93%, is in line with similar and above City schools.

The school provides a variety of extracurricular activities including instrumental and vocal music, computers, athletics and a student government organization.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is passionate about her school and is respected for her dedication by the whole school community.
- All staff share a common vision which is evident throughout the school.
- Teachers work collaboratively to plan lessons and assess student progress.
- Data is used extensively to monitor student progress at student, grade, class and school level.
- All staff articulate high expectations that are reflected by the responses from students.
- Careful selection of curriculum and instructional programs has resulted in improvement in student attainment.
- The writers' workshop program is having a positive impact on students writing.
- Professional development is strength of the school and embraced by all staff.
- The introduction of the school enrichment model is developing students' creativity and enhancing their school experience.
- Communication with parents is excellent.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend the use of the breadth of student data to precisely inform measurable school goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan.
- Incorporate interim goals for plans and interventions and structured opportunities to review and modify actions and intended outcomes.
- Further develop teachers' ability to use data to plan for differentiation, particularly to challenge students who find some concepts easy to grasp.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well developed school.

Arturo Toscanini is a school in which every student is valued for their unique ability and potential. The principal and her staff work as an effective team focused on student progress across a range of subjects and skills. Programs are selected to maximize student progress and underpin the school vision. Opportunities for enrichment are sought, from enabling the science teacher to be involved in a professional development project at NASA to involving students and parents in the dinosaur exhibition on the natural history bus. Data is analyzed regularly to monitor progress, and walk throughs and observations are used effectively to inform professional development decisions. Students enjoy coming to school and appreciate the efforts their teachers make to explain work to them. Parents feel that the school is a safe environment for their children and that the staff are committed to “bringing out the giftedness in every child”. The area for development is focused on sharpening the aspirations for students into precisely measurable goals and outcomes.

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 is data rich, with all staff using objective City and State test data and ongoing formative assessments to monitor student progress. Teachers keep running records and focused conferencing notes to assess reading, comprehension and writing. Portfolios of work are developed for each student and teachers grade work in relation to rubrics for English language arts. This information is used to assess which skills students lack and to inform future planning. Teachers’ comments on written work focus specifically on teaching points and often contain helpful development points for students. Teachers use some of their common grade preparation time to discuss student work samples and monitor trends with the involvement of the English language coach. As a result, all staff have a thorough knowledge of the progress of their students. All staff involved in interventions assess their students regularly and meet informally with teachers to discuss progress. The administrators keep records for each class that show individual student results and interventions. They use data to analyze progress for all subjects, including social studies and science, within classes, grades and specific groupings such as special education students. The English as second language teachers monitor the progress of English language learners and look for patterns and trends. The instructional team uses the data effectively to compare the school’s performance with other similar schools. The assistant principal has been monitoring the results in mathematics since the introduction of Everyday Mathematics and has found that achievement over the past 3 years has risen significantly.

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 well developed overall.

The school has broad expectations that all students will move from one grade to another annually and achieve the expected level of achievement. Currently they do not use their extensive assessment data precisely enough to formulate specific goals for students. Some of the goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan are measurable but the percentages set for overall achievement are not directly based on the data they have for students in each grade and across the school. Students receiving interventions are monitored for progress, and plans adapted accordingly, but unlike students with an individual education plan, they do not have objectively measurable goals.

The Comprehensive Education Plan was formulated with input from teachers and parents working together in groups. The staff goals for the year are on display outside the main office. Working with the English language arts coach; the teachers in each grade from 3-5 use common preparation periods to plan units of study. The coach then provides appropriate support materials, including reading strategy packs, and assessments for the next writing workshop focus. Students receiving academic interventions are monitored regularly and if they make significant progress then the support is reduced. Classes for English language learners and collaborative team teaching follow the same pattern as general education classes to ensure all students benefit from similar experiences. Parents are fulsome in their praise for the school. They are well informed about their children’s progress through regular meetings with teachers. They feel that the school provides both challenge and support for students whatever their ability level.

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 overall.

The school has developed a broad curriculum including science and the arts, while maintaining a clear focus on students’ progress in mathematics and English language arts. Students benefit from guided reading groups, after school instruction and the use of the writers’ workshop model. The latest initiative is the development of the school enrichment model based on Joseph Renzulli’s gifted and talented model. This opportunity to select an area of interest has been offered to students in grades 4 and 5. Classes are focused on teacher enthusiasm and skill and are intended to develop student creativity, thinking and research skills. They are 3 weeks into the 8 week program and areas for study include sign language, knitting, tap dancing, architecture, science exploration, guitar and silk screen printing. Students are working in groups of up to ten and with their teachers will develop their own outcomes. As this is a new initiative the impact has yet to be fully evaluated.

Teachers are focused on students’ outcomes and use assessment information to provide additional input to students who have not mastered a skill. General education teachers use English as second language strategies to support their English language learner students. Most of the teachers group children for activities and children are encouraged to self evaluate and select appropriate books for themselves. Some teachers use

assessment data to plan for differentiation but it is not yet consistent and does not always fully challenge students who find the concepts easy to grasp.

The principal is committed to providing quality materials to support the instructional programs. As a result of successful bids a dance floor has been installed and the provision of a 'Robin Hood' library has been agreed. Teachers are allocated to classes in line with the school vision and values 'Teachers and children together in harmony pursuing excellence'. Progress data is used to decide who would benefit from push in and pull out additional support services and after school instruction. Classes are organized on student ability, but with due consideration given to any behavior issues. The workshop model of instruction is carefully designed to facilitate student participation. Students are engaged by the lessons, they feel that teachers explain concepts that they do not understand and they enjoy the opportunity to express their feelings during writers' workshop classes. Teachers and guidance counselors provide personal support to students. Student attendance is monitored rigorously by teachers and the administration team and students with 100% attendance are rewarded annually.

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.

The principal and all staff work together as an effective team in their drive for excellence. Teachers know that the principal has equally high expectations for herself and everyone working in the school. New staff, such as the assistant principal, have demonstrated their ability to analyze data and focus on pupil progress. Staff regularly work together to plan additional school activities such as music and dance presentations.

Professional development is a major strength of the school and includes ongoing observation, support and modeling from coaches. Eight teachers per month attend Teachers College then share their knowledge of the writers' workshop model with other teachers in their grade to support this school wide initiative. The impact is evident in the guidance on display in classrooms and in the quality of writing that the students are producing. Before the school enrichment model was introduced, seven teachers volunteered to attend the initial 5 day training in the summer holidays 2006 to learn the philosophy and practice that underpins the model. Although the model has only been in operation for three sessions the students are already engaged and excited by the activities.

Professional development decisions are driven by classroom observations and walk throughs which are a regular activity for the administration and coach. The principal gives verbal and written feedback focused on strengths and areas needing development. The written observations include comments related to aspects of the principles of learning that underpin the school philosophy. Teachers share their personal reflections on teaching strategies that work, but there have been no recent opportunities for teachers to observe each other. The outcomes of interim assessments and final tests are discussed in grade meetings and by the instructional team. Information and data from these meetings is then used to plan instructional programs.

The principal is seen by the parents as approachable with a clear, focused commitment to the school and their children. She is respected by teachers for being knowledgeable and motivated and having introduced changes for the good of the school. The school is well

organized, with the whole community aware of procedures and expectations. The students know exactly what is expected of them and they behave well.

The interventions from services such as speech and occupational therapy are integrated in to the school process and effectively support the aims of high achievement for all students. Partnerships with outside organizations are well established and include an adult English language learners program. Recently the students performed to the local veterans of war veteran day which was appreciated by the whole community.

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 principal and her instructional team regularly review school programs and procedures to see what is effective, asking 'what is working well?' However the Comprehensive Education Plan does not yet contain interim goals with a structured approach to measuring the effectiveness of actions against outcomes. Teachers use interim assessments to measure progress in relation to expected attainment in units of work, but not, at present, to measure progress towards specific goals. Unit plans will be adapted to allow opportunities for students to work again on skills that they have grasped or concepts that have not been understood. The cluster teachers and those working in 4th and 5th grade have met to review the workings of the school enrichment model. There was a clear agenda; everyone shared their successes to date and aspects that were not working. Clear agreement was reached on the next steps, but at this stage there has been no articulation in relation to the long term outcomes intended as a result of this initiative. Individual education plans contain specific goals which are monitored annually, but currently there are no interim goals. The school monitors the impact of actions, but not in a systematic way.

Students make good progress as can be seen from work in portfolios and in the trend for an increase in test results. All members of the school team are committed to the school vision and have high expectations for all the students. The school has the capacity to continue to develop its strengths and increase the specificity of the goal setting process to support student attainment.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

| | | | |
|---|---|---|----------|
| SCHOOL NAME: Arturo Toscanini (PS 216) | ∅ | ✓ | + |
| 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 | |