



The New York Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Samuel J. Tilden High School

18K415

**5800 Tilden Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11203**

Principal: Diane Varano

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Reviewers: Cheryl Baker and Kath Wood

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Samuel J. Tilden High School currently serves 2297 students in four grades, 9 through to 12. According to the most recent data, the student population is 91.7% Black and 6.5% Hispanic with very few White or Asian students. Eleven percent are English language learners and 13% are special education students. Twenty-three percent are recent arrivals in the country, largely from the Caribbean region. Approximately 63% of students have Title 1 eligibility. Most recent figures indicate that a large proportion of students enter the school at level 1 or level 2 and more than 50% of students are over-age and under-credited. The school's attendance is lower than that of similar schools and schools and the number of reported police department incidents is higher than schools of similar size.

The principal, in her second year as the administrator, has put many programs and practices into place to address the needs of the school community. Her efforts and leadership have received enthusiastic support from students, teachers, parents and her administrative staff.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The staff ensures an orderly and safe environment for learning within the context of the larger social milieu.
- The principal provides clear, focused, enthusiastic and visible leadership for continued school improvement.
- The school gathers and uses data regarding students' attendance, scholarship and behavior to guide planning effectively at the administrative level.
- There are structures in place to ensure that the written and taught curriculum aligns with state standards.
- The administration expresses high expectations for the implementation of best practices in every classroom.
- The principal empowers adults to take responsibility for leadership.
- The school culture makes students, staff and administrators feel known, included and important.
- The school community values and celebrates the cultures and countries of origin of its students and staff members.

What the school needs to improve

- Elevate the improvement of academic achievement to the same level of urgency as that of security and attendance, supported by regular classroom observations and evaluations by the principal.
- Identify all students at risk of failure and develop a concrete plan of action to tackle their weaknesses.
- Establish a pattern of regular assessments of each student's progress and make adjustments to individual plans until each student meets success.
- Embed the use of formative and summative assessment in the instructional practice of all teachers.
- Continue to increase opportunities for students to participate in extracurricular activities in the arts, athletics, academics, government and other programs that involve them in the life of the school.
- Continue to address issues of attendance and security.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The culture of this school, which has developed under the current leadership, is one that exhibits caring and respectful support of all school constituencies in their collaborative effort to overcome their deficits and continue to move the school on a path of continuous improvement. Recent initiatives have calmed the school environment and created an orderly atmosphere in which teaching and learning can take place. Although there are areas of the school's work that are undeveloped, school leaders possess a good understanding of those areas which require further development and the actions that need to be taken to bring about improvements in teaching, learning, attendance and achievement.

How well the school meets New York'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 principal and her administrative team have an established a weekly pattern of reviewing and analyzing students' academic achievement, attendance, incident and other available data to inform decisions about the effectiveness of the school's programs and practices in improving students' achievement. Additionally, some academic departments generate quantitative and qualitative data regarding the performance of students by subject and by teacher in order to encourage staff collaboration around effective instructional techniques. All departments routinely analyze results of common mid-term and final exams with respect to students' performance and instructional effectiveness.

The school uses a range of performance data to inform the placement of incoming freshmen and adjust courses to meet students' needs. The academic intervention services team meets regularly to analyze the performance data of special education students relative to their individual education plans. Teachers of English language learners monitor the academic and social progress of their students through the use of assessment data as well as information gathered from a network of faculty mentors. Teachers in the Tilden New Opportunities Program track the incremental progress of their over-age and under-credited students in order to support their progress towards attaining a high school diploma.

With the exception of the practices regarding English language learners whose 2005 Regents passing rate was 25.3 percentage points above similar schools and 16.8 percentage points above schools across the City, other programs and practices were instituted or restructured during the 2005-2006 school year under the guidance of the current principal. These structures are based on the use of data and are beginning to have an impact, and recently the percentage of students receiving Regents diplomas rose and the percentage of non-completers dropped.

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 undeveloped.

The school’s leaders, with faculty input, work collaboratively to formulate plans and produce documents based on data that include objectively measurable goals and timelines. For the most part, the focus of these plans is on the school as a whole, not on each student, classroom, or grade level.

In the 2005-2006 academic year, the school instituted programs to address the needs of students in greatest need of improvement. The Tilden New Opportunities Program was formed to begin to meet the needs of the school’s over-age and under-credited population, resulting in the 67% of attendees passing all three Regents exams. Data on the success of other initiatives is not yet available. While these efforts demonstrate a commitment to developing individualized programs based on individual student’s needs, school leaders recognize that this practice must be extended to all classrooms and all students.

The school’s mission expresses high expectations for students’ achievement, reflected in the principal’s high expectations for quality instructional practice. Students report challenging instruction in approximately half of their classes. Meetings with parents are generally reactive. The school has not instituted regular meetings with parents and students which are driven by the evaluation of each student’s individual plan. The introduction of small-group advisory sessions during the extended instructional periods for grade 9 students at level 1 and 2 demonstrates an initial step towards identifying each student’s needs and creating individualized plans of action. The school possesses a clear understanding of the actions necessary to improve.

Quality Statement 3 – Build and Align Capacity: 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’s academic departments demonstrate a well-established practice of developing and revising the local curricula based upon State mandates, the scoring and analysis of Regents examinations, and the needs of students. Common departmental mid-term and final examinations provide interim data regarding students’ progress. Some departments have developed common lessons and interim assessments. Teachers’ instructional practice is monitored by the assistant principals and students’ outcomes are assessed through the marks analysis and, in some departments, by comparisons of teachers’ effectiveness. As a result, teachers are being training in differentiated instruction to better meet students’ needs. Lessons do, for the most part, incorporate active learning, although it is not evident that teachers’ choices of instructional techniques are based on needs revealed by individual student data.

Under the current administration, budget decisions are transparent and informed by student data and goals set in the Comprehensive Education Plan. The school safety action plan and data regarding incidents and attendance inform staffing decisions in the area of student management, changes in the scanning of persons entering the school,

clearer expectations for the deployment and actions of school safety personnel, and the hiring of an attendance teacher. The school is working hard to promote good attendance. Attendance is monitored daily. Weekly attendance data is distributed to all guidance personnel and a team meets bi-weekly to address attendance issues and follow up on home contacts and other actions with respect to increasing the school's attendance rate.

There is a pervasive pattern of caring and personal support for students by the adults in the building, described by one student as 'going well beyond the typical student-teacher relationship.' Students recount numerous examples of teachers reaching out to help them academically, socially and emotionally. One student credited her mentor for not only providing tutoring so that she could pass the Regents, but for being her advisor regarding personal matters related to her immigrant status. From the principal, whose open-door policy welcomes students at all times, to teachers and security personnel, a culture that values knowing and respecting all students is immediately observable. However, there are not enough opportunities for students to participate in extracurricular activities in the arts, athletics, academics, government and other programs that involve them in the life of the school.

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 overall.

Since her arrival, the principal has garnered the overwhelming and enthusiastic support of her students, administrators, teaching staff and those parents who have accepted the invitation to work with her in improving the school. Her actions have brought about significant improvement in the school's climate and culture. All constituents state that they feel safe, respected and valued. The principal's open and forthright approach to individual and school problems is highly respected. Administrators and teachers recognize her expertise in instructional pedagogy and value her capacity as the instructional leader. Students count her among the array of caring adults who support their educational experience.

During her brief tenure, hiring has been limited. The principal has criteria for selecting security and student management personnel that emphasize a deep caring for children and an understanding of techniques that are effective in reaching students who may be resistant to learning.

Prior to the principal's appointment, professional development was not the norm in the school. The principal and the cabinet analyzed student performance data, surveyed staff to determine their strengths, weaknesses and interests, and targeted areas for professional development. Teachers were enabled to develop professional growth plans that incorporated school-wide priorities, as well as personal goals. The principal, through her active monitoring of the building on a daily basis, composite observations made with the assistant principals and the teacher evaluation process, supports teachers in improving their instructional practices. Teachers are encouraged to visit one another's classes but these opportunities are not scheduled often enough for them.

Staff routinely undertake collaborative planning in teams to evaluate the impact of the school's actions on achievement and attendance, to consider the implications of the analysis of assessment data on the curriculum and new techniques in instructional practice and to solve problems concerning students at risk. Likewise, outside bodies collaborate

with school personnel to implement programs aimed at increasing students' achievement. The school has a good understanding of what needs to be done to secure improvement.

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.

The school makes good use of data analysis and creates plans of good quality that set goals and identify actions aimed at achieving their intended goals. The school exhibits a culture of collaboration in formulating and revising goals and plans and has a good grasp of its areas of greatest need. For some categories of students, there are plans that serve to guide and measure instruction and, in some departments, data is used to compare student progress across classrooms. However, there is no systemic practice of identifying the needs of all students, developing concrete individual plans to address these needs, and supporting increased achievement through periodic assessments and regular diagnostic measurement. In the absence of these practices, the notions of the revisions of plans, the comparison of progress across classrooms and the realignment of practices and resources are not working well enough.

School leaders recognize the need to institute these practices for all students, not just those most at risk, and have begun the process of identifying the steps and resources necessary to achieve the total integration of the systemic use of data to improve student achievement.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Samuel J. Tilden High School (HS 415)	∅	✓	+
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		