



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Tito Puente Education Complex**

**Intermediate School 117**

**240 East 109 Street  
New York  
NY 10029**

**Principal: Major Fareed**

**Dates of review: February 1 - 2, 2007**

**Reviewer: Terry Turner**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Until this school year, Tito Puente housed seventh and eighth graders in two academies, Technical Institute for Multicultural Education and Performing Arts. It is now a performing arts academy for sixth to eighth graders with 512 enrolled students. Nearby is an academy for talented and gifted students.

Roughly 66% of students are Hispanic, and 32% are Black, with the remaining small proportion from other groups. Approximately 12% of students are English language learners, with Spanish being the first language of nearly all of these students. The number of recently arrived students has more than tripled in recent years, but is still below that of similar schools. The proportion of special education students is 19%. The school receives Title 1 funding, with 78% of students eligible. Students' attendance has improved slightly to 89.4% but is still below the average for similar and City schools.

The newly-extended performing arts academy has a mission to offer skills-based instruction in one of the performing arts to a wider group of students. The former performing arts academy had already entered into a partnership with a theatre company and many students currently have the opportunity to collaborate with arts professionals.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- There is a strong sense of teamwork between assistant principals, lead teachers and coaches.
- Teachers are committed to ensuring that literacy skills are taught across the curriculum.
- Performing arts makes a valuable contribution to the life of the school.
- Most teachers participate in professional development in order to increase and develop their skills.
- Sound investments have been made to boost resources and enhance students' learning experiences.
- Faculties engage in a collaborative process to set individual goals and targets.
- Teachers are monitored routinely and there are many opportunities for inter-class visitations.
- The needs of students with individual education plans are broadly met.
- Although attendance is not good, absences are followed up quickly.
- Students are being encouraged to experience the joy of reading.

### What the school needs to improve

- Analyze and interpret data more rigorously in order to gain a greater insight into students' performance and progress.
- Consider a wider range of assessment techniques that can be applied consistently throughout the school.
- Involve teachers more systematically in identifying whole-school goals and targets.
- Improve attendance and punctuality and, as a matter of urgency, behaviour throughout the school.
- Encourage parents to become more actively involved in the life of the school in order that they may enhance and support learning.
- Monitor with greater rigor and consistency the realignment of practices to improve students' outcomes.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is an undeveloped school.**

There is a strong commitment to the school from a core of very dedicated teachers. The school has a number of strengths, particularly in performing arts. It has undertaken some interesting and revealing research into students' reading skills and habits. A lot of good practice is evident in the school although not all of this is shared as widely as it might be.

The school produces a reasonable amount of data to supplement that provided by external sources. However, it is not yet proficient in making the best use of all available data so that it can monitor the progress of students over time. Teachers interact well in their planning meetings and discuss interesting ways of aligning instruction. However, targets and goals for many students are insufficiently challenging to move them on to a higher level.

Punctuality, behavior and attendance are real issues in the school. Since September, there have been a high number of in-school and superintendent suspensions. There is a general lack of parental support and involvement, which includes the setting of goals and targets.

The school has rightly adjusted its spending priorities to address a number of deficiencies revealed by some of the data. Students now have more opportunities to be creative and to use modern technologies. The school has yet to devise an effective way of monitoring and evaluating its work so that it can adapt, adjust and revise its plans in order to meet its goals for accelerating learning. In forming the new academy a degree of internal organizational restructuring has been necessary. This is taking some time to bed down as communication systems are established. In the longer term, the perceived benefits of one consolidated academy have been documented in the Comprehensive Education Plan.

### 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 undeveloped.**

The school's practice of gathering and making good use of all available data in order to monitor student's progress is undeveloped. There are pockets of good practice in English language arts, mathematics and performing arts. However, although the school does generate some of its own data, there is currently an over-reliance on external sources of data. A good analysis of data relating to students' reading skills revealed that many seventh grade students were reading two levels below where they should have been. A new library has now been created with the aim of making books more interesting, and each student is required to keep a reading log. There are indications that this project has revitalized students' attitudes to reading. However, there is no rigorous monitoring process

or systematic evaluation procedure that clearly reveals the success of this initiative for each student or groups of students.

There is some good work in progress focusing on literacy across the curriculum. At a grade level meeting, teachers discussed how they would encourage students to explain and articulate their answers to problem-solving in mathematics. The focus on language skills is evident in classrooms. For example, in a lesson on shape and space, students were enjoined to be more eloquent in their use of language through using words like construct rather than draw.

English language learners and students with individual education plans are appropriately assessed on entry to the school using standard techniques. The school then uses this information to determine the composition of the bilingual classes, which have been formed for the first time in grades 6 and 7, as well as how students will be supported in terms of literacy skills.

Leaders have not yet developed an effective school-wide program for understanding and applying student data from standardized tests and then continually monitoring their performance and progress, either at individual or group level. The school is not yet at the stage where it can compare its performance with similar schools or examine trends over time.

**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 with some proficient features.**

There is a high incidence of collaborative planning amongst several groups of teachers. Teachers openly discuss what strategies have worked and which ones have been less successful. They look at portfolios of work to determine grade levels. Teacher and coach committees develop annual goals. However, goals to improve students’ performance and progress are not sufficiently demanding or challenging.

One outcome of staff deliberation has been the implementation of a daily silent reading period. The school has made a determination that by the end of three years all students will be able to make sense of the book which they have read. It is not entirely clear how this will be monitored and evaluated over time. The school is just coming to terms with the need to demonstrate the impact of what they do on outcomes, for example, how the new focus on reading promotes the achievement of stated goals like ‘students will take greater responsibility for their learning’.

There is a good example of the special education teacher support service conducting reading assessments for all students with individual education plans. This information was then shared with literacy teachers in order to support them in their work with students. This has developed into small group instruction specifically targeting students’ areas of need in literacy development. Although teachers instinctively feel that this initiative has been of some benefit, the outcome has not yet been fully evaluated.

Conveying high expectations to students and parents is not practiced routinely or consistently. Although parents are invited to discuss their children’s progress, few take

advantage of these opportunities. As a consequence, goals for improving student performance and progress are not shared by all members of the community.

**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 undeveloped with some proficient features.**

Although there are clear examples where the school is aligning its instructional activity to accelerate learning, there are important aspects that are undeveloped. The school is at the early stages of developing a coherent curriculum that will align with the mandated curriculum and generating meaningful interim data to support its improvement plans.

There are inconsistencies in teachers’ accountability for improving instruction and student outcomes. Not all teachers make good use of student data in planning their lessons. When students’ are appropriately challenged, their response is extremely positive. However, when little account is taken of data relating to their performance, students do not engage fully in the learning process.

Recent budgeting decisions have been firmly based on the needs revealed by student data, for example, a paucity of suitable reading material, few resources that support an inquiry approach to learning, and a deficiency in modern technological equipment. This is now being remedied and students have greater access to, and are taking advantage of, such facilities as electronic whiteboards.

Using student data to determine staffing and scheduling decisions is at an early stage of development. The school has made a number of effective staffing decisions based on student data. For example, it has a good track record of developing students’ creative talents and many students enjoy, and excel, in art, music, drama and dance. Innovative use has also been made of video and theatre productions, culminating in a variety of student performances. However, there are situations in other subjects where staffing and scheduling decisions have not improved student outcomes.

There is a wide feeling of mistrust and a lack of respect between some students and teachers. Whilst there are some very good examples of teachers supporting the academic progress of students, there are instances in which breakdowns in relationships are impeding progress. A consequence of this is the poor punctuality and attendance of a large proportion of students. Although the school has mechanisms in place to alert parents about non-attendance, these systems are not working as well as they should.

**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 undeveloped with some proficient features.**

There are few examples of faculties sharing ideas or comparing outcomes across classrooms and with other schools. There are also few collaboratively established whole-school goals for accelerating the learning of all students. There are excellent examples of cooperation within faculties, for example English language arts, mathematics and performing arts in which data are used to improve performance and progress.

Training that is designed to help staff use and apply data to improve academic outcomes is not well developed. However, most teachers are reasonably content with the professional development that they receive, such as training in the wider application of literacy skills and access to computer technology. The school does not have formal mechanisms for identifying professional development, like matching training to goals and targets in the Comprehensive Education Plan.

Inter-classroom visitations are a rich source of professional development for many teachers in the school. Coaches, lead teachers and others who feel that they have a particular skill frequently provide demonstration lessons. For example, staff have demonstrated using electronic whiteboards to motivate, inspire and enhance students' learning, as seen in a lesson on shape and space. The principal also observes classroom teaching and provides detailed feedback on areas of strength and points for improvement.

Whilst the day-to-day running of the school is proficient, there are frequent breakdowns in communication between senior managers and other staff. For example, staff indicate that they are not aware of the school's vision and are not involved in whole-school planning. This lack of clarity leads to the misinterpretation of goals and targets and inconsistencies in carrying out policies and procedures. This applies not only to elements of instruction but also to such matters as student behaviour, which in many instances is unacceptable.

The school has established good links with the local community through its status as a performing arts school. These contacts help the school to achieve its academic goals in relation to performing arts.

**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 evaluation of individual students' progress and that of particular groups is insufficiently robust. A number of analyses are encapsulated in the Comprehensive Education Plan and, from the findings, implications for instructional programs are deduced. However, these analyses and the rationale for action are not shared widely with staff. There are also few success criteria to measure how effectively plans are being implemented and to what extent stated goals are being reached. Some comparisons of student progress across classrooms are made, for example in mathematics. However, only limited use is made of these contrasting features to measure the progress of plans and interventions.

There is inevitably some evaluation of students' progress resulting from classroom visitations, the examination of students' portfolios and interim assessments. However, the good practice that exists in the school is not shared and used routinely on a school-wide basis. The school does not yet make effective use of the available data to identify the level of support needed and how well individual and whole-school targets have been met.

The school has introduced positive changes in a number of areas, for example attempting to make reading a more pleasurable activity. However, a thorough and robust evaluation of the development plan is not, as yet, used for setting new goals and driving forward improvement planning. Actions have clearly had to be prioritized and so it has not been possible for the school to review the progress of all initiatives. However, there is little

doubt that the school has been stronger at implementing policies than it has been in monitoring their effectiveness.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Tito Puente Education Complex (IS 117)</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 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		
<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>	∅	✓	+
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>	∅	✓	+
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>	∅	✓	+
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		