



# The New York City Department of Education



# Quality Review Report

**Technology, Arts and Sciences Studio**

**Middle School 301**

**185 1st Avenue  
New York  
NY 10003**

**Principal: George Morgan**

**Dates of review: January 25 - 26, 2007**

**Reviewer: Carol Foresta**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Technology, Arts and Sciences Studio Middle School is a small school which opened in 2006. Located on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, this school aims to provide a learning environment for young adolescents based on the most current research on adolescent development with regard to multiple intelligences theory. There are currently 210 students enrolled in grades 6 through 8. The school is growing in size and currently shares its site with an elementary school.

The school is made up of students from Hispanic (59%), Black (23%), Asian (8%) and White (6%) backgrounds and a small proportion of American Indian students. Special education students make up 20% of the population, a higher proportion than found in similar and City schools. Just over 3% of students are English language learners, a proportion which is smaller than typically found in similar and City schools. In addition to English, Spanish and Arabic are the main languages spoken at home. The school is not eligible for Title 1 funding. There is one self-contained special education class.

The attendance rate is 92% which is broadly typical of similar and City schools

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal is perceived as having turned the school around and forged it into a functional community.
- The principal is hard-working, honest, supportive and accessible and is able to keep people focused.
- The students feel respected by the teachers and the principal and know they can expect to be taken seriously and helped if they have a problem.
- Many students are engaged in their lessons and value the supportive culture created in their school.
- Students are known well to their teachers, guidance counsellor, coaches and principal.
- The teachers are energetic and caring.
- The academic intervention services team takes a serious and thoughtful approach towards analyzing the data available to help them support students who need the most help to learn.
- Most teachers use data and assessments to improve their instruction and move the intellectual growth and development of their students.
- Professional development, a key priority, is supported by coaches, outside consultants and some inter-visitations and common preparation time.
- Every student has the opportunity to take part in art, music and drama classes.

### What the school needs to improve

- Implement formal systems to ensure a school-wide understanding and use of data, to set measurable goals linked to student achievement, to further differentiate instruction, engage students intellectually and implement planned interventions for all students in need of support.
- Ensure student engagement in lessons by implementing a consistently interesting curriculum and learning activities.
- Ensure all teachers have time to plan collaboratively and to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching methods on students' learning.
- Formalize systems for class observation and give oral and written feedback to teachers regarding their pedagogy.
- Continue to develop more active parental involvement and extend partnerships with youth development, support services and the local community.
- Implement more rigorous systems to monitor and tackle lateness, and the behavior of a minority of students who spoil things for the majority.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

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

Over the past year, since the arrival of the new principal, the school has made a good start in implementing its vision and plans for development. School organization has improved and the school is mostly calm and orderly. Many teachers value highly the supportive culture established in the school as well as its small size, which enables the teachers to know all the students well. The teachers are organized into teams which allow some to collaborate on curriculum and practice, as well as to share information and knowledge about the students.

There is some good practice in using data effectively to guide instruction and plan the next steps in learning for students. However, this is not yet consistent practice across the school. Some new systems have been introduced, but some remain informal and it is too soon to see their impact on student achievement. The effective leadership of the principal and the commitment of the staff mean that the school is well placed to build on its established systems and make further improvement.

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

#### **Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.**

#### **This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The school collects and analyzes a range of data to build a secure picture of how well individual students and groups of students achieve. The data includes information from State and City tests, and the school's own tests and assessments completed during lessons. The academic intervention service and pupil personnel teams, and English language arts and mathematics teachers, meet regularly to discuss the performance and progress of students and so have a clear understanding of what identified students know and are able to do in these subjects.

Specialist teachers and the guidance counselor keep detailed data of the progress of special education students. This includes the data gathered from referrals and the information gleaned from individual education plans. The information is used to track the progress of this school's most needy students and ensure that they get help in order to be successful. This detailed process is not used for students who are English language learners or to track the progress of different groupings including by gender or ethnicity. However, the school recognizes the importance of collecting data and has implemented measures to track the progress of individual students. It is too early in this process to measure fully the effect on achievement.

The school measures its current performance and progress with similar and other City schools. It has not been possible to compare the achievements of the current group of students with previous groups, since this is a new school and there is no data for the year before.

**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.**

Teachers use data to set goals for individuals and groups of students in their classes. The principal works closely with teachers on ensuring that these goals are high enough and build on current achievement. Goals in the school’s Comprehensive Education Plan outline clearly what the school intends to achieve over its first year but because there is little data to date, are not closely matched to, or measured by, student expected achievement. Most classrooms and hallways display the school’s expectations about behavior and many classrooms have rubrics and standards-based criteria for success. However, these are not used consistently, and overall, specific expectations about the levels at which students are and should be working are not obvious in all classes. When work is shared on bulletin boards, there is little or no commentary made by all teachers on the work. However, teachers meet regularly with individual students to record the progress being made in their reading and share expectations of what they need to do next to improve in this aspect.

The school utilizes data effectively to support the learning of special education students and those achieving at levels 1 and 2 in formal tests. Goals outlined in individual education plans are used to inform suitable small group interventions and attendance at extended-day activities. The same consistently well-focused support is not yet in place to guide the learning of English language learners.

The school’s goals and plans have not been shared with parents on a school-wide basis. While teachers make efforts to contact parents and share what they are learning about the work ethic and efforts of their students, this is not a consistent formal process. The new parents’ association leadership is still trying to plan ways to increase parental interest and involvement. Parents make it clear that they want to work with the new principal. However, few currently come to meetings or volunteer for tasks that would involve them more in the day-to-day life of the school.

**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 curriculum is mainly mandated around specific tests and requirements from the City. There is some good practice in using data to support instruction, particularly in English language arts and mathematics. For example, the Teachers College model is being used in the reading and writing workshops. Teachers spend time conferencing with individual students, keep notes on these exchanges and use these notes to challenge students to improve and advance in their studies. However, the method is not consistently used across the grades and in all subject areas. There is too little long-term data to evaluate the impact of instruction on overall student achievement.

Budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions are all based on documented student needs. For example, the principal has applied for a magnet grant to help support the needs of the students in the school in their unique learning styles. In this way, the school hopes to foster the development of skills, talents, attitudes and abilities to support their continued success in learning.

Equal emphasis is given to developing students' social and academic skills and learning. The school organized a successful trip to an education centre at the beginning of the year. As a result, students established positive relationships and the behavior in the school calmed down considerably. Teachers treat students with respect, and in most cases this is reciprocated. Students mostly feel secure in the school and feel they can approach an adult and get support and advice if they are confronted with a dilemma that they need help resolving.

Lessons do not always engage students and so there is some low level disruption in some classes. While there have been improvements in student behavior over the last six months, there is no consistent formalized school protocol on how to deal with disruptive students. Project-based lessons are used effectively in some classes to successfully engage students. However, this good practice is inconsistent across the school.

Absence is tackled appropriately. Calls are made home for anyone who is absent and students are aware that the school will be calling if they do not come in. However, the school does not deal with the large number of students who regularly arrive late.

**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 teaching staff at the school is young, largely inexperienced, energetic and committed to quality instructional practice. They have been hired based on their energy and willingness to learn. Consequently, teachers are learning how to use data more effectively to improve instruction. They are looking to coaches for support and making some inter-visitations to broaden their knowledge and experience. The professional development provided by Teachers College is greatly valued by the teachers because it is helping them to be more effective in their teaching of reading and writing.

The principal is looking for more time in which to formalize the system for observing lessons more regularly and systematically. He has been doing many informal observations and having informal conversations with his staff about their practice. The teachers value his advice and look forward to his visits.

Some teachers have time to work collaboratively in their teams and all meet formally as a faculty every month. English language arts and mathematics teachers meet usually at least weekly. However, not all departments meet so regularly and so not all teachers are able to share existing good practice.

Movement around the school is generally calm and orderly because the principal and some of the teachers are highly visible in the hallways supporting movement by students. When they are not there, some students misbehave and cause negative incidents. The principal is committed to providing more character-building in advisories to try to eliminate this kind of social stress and so ensure that the students can feel safe at all times. The

school generally runs smoothly because procedures are clearly communicated and are mostly followed.

It is clear that the principal is respected and has the capacity to effect change. All of the constituencies of the school, students, teachers and parents express their confidence and respect in the current principal.

The school has a small number of after-school programs and a few extended-day classes that are offered for students who need them. Presently the programs offered reach only a small number of students and do not have the capacity to engage the imagination or participation of the larger population. There are few partnerships with youth development, support services and the local 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 undeveloped.**

The principal recognizes the value of monitoring instruction and revising plans and goals. It is for this reason, supported by the collaboration and respect of the teachers at the school, that this school has plans to move more in the direction of utilizing data to support the learning of its students.

All teachers plan and intervene wherever possible based on interim goals and frequent assessments. However, there is not enough data to measure whether the students are reaching the goals and the high expectations established for them because the school is so new. There is too little data to enable the effective comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and beyond that to other schools.

At this point, the school recognizes that it has an ultimate goal for utilizing data more effectively to monitor each student's progress throughout the year. However, they are not there yet. English language arts and mathematics teachers do more frequent and diagnostic assessments of student progress to help evaluate progress towards the school's goals of raising achievement in these subjects. However, this is not a consistent process across grades and other subject areas. As a result, there is no formal evidence of the realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes except for special education students. Procedures for monitoring the quality of learning and instruction are in place informally. However, the school is too new for this to be established in practice.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Technology, Arts &amp; Sciences Studio (MS 301)</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>	Ø	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.		X	
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.	X		
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.		X	
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>		X	
<b>Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>	Ø	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.		X	
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.		X	
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.	X		
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.	X		
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.	X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>		X	
<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>	Ø	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.	X		
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.	X		
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.	X		
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.	X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>	X		