



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**The Arturo Toscaninni School for Creative
Education and Arts**

Junior High School 145

**1000 Teller Avenue
Bronx
NY 10456**

Principal: Robert Hannibal

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Reviewer: Peter Williman

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Arturo Toscaninni School for Creative Education and the Arts is a Junior High School that serves 504 students in grades 5 through 8. The student population comprises 59% Hispanic students, 38% Black students, 2.0% Asian and students of other ethnic backgrounds and 1.0% White students. Special education students represent about 10% of the total school population and 17% of students are English language learners. Attendance statistics for 2006 indicate that the school average attendance of 91.1% was above that of similar schools and in line with that City schools. The school receives Title 1 funding for 83.7% of its students. This figure is just below that of similar schools but well above the average for City schools.

The school is one of three academies housed in the same building and formed from the reorganization of one school in 2005. The Arturo Toscaninni School occupies the fourth floor with school offices on the first floor.

This is an empowerment school. Empowerment schools have more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their school community. Empowerment schools are free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with and benefit from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is respected for his hard work and personal oversight of the school by, students, teachers, parents and the wider community.
- The school has initiated sound strategies to introduce data driven instruction.
- Students with special talents realize their creative achievement as a result of the school's support.
- Programs support high achieving students very well.
- Data demonstrates a rising profile of student achievement, especially by students at level 1.
- Almost all students are well engaged in lessons.
- Students enjoy school and respond well to its philosophy.
- The principal's daily involvement in and around classrooms ensures the school runs very smoothly.
- The quality of learning benefits from the blend of experience within the faculty.
- The school's philosophy for mutual respect is implemented well and this supports student engagement in lessons and progress.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve planning to identify attainable, measurable, objectives based upon the schools achievement data, at class, grade and school level.
- Ensure all plans have a clear schedule for implementation and appropriate criteria, which will give evidence of the impact of those plans on student achievement.
- Further develop teacher assessment and records of students to be of consistent high quality, including through the uses of technology.
- Extend the range of instruction that provides sufficient challenge to students through more extensive differentiation of teaching based on data analysis.
- Analyze student performance by ethnicity and other groupings.
- Raise parent involvement in the life and work of the school.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The Arturo Toscaninni School for Creative Education and the Arts demonstrates the name through the high quality of student achievement the school promotes in debating, poetry, visual arts and music. All students are encouraged to make the most of their potential but the school provides services to enable its high attaining students to access prestigious high schools. The principal's leadership and introduction of data driven instruction in this academic year is enabling the school to reach a new balance after the relative trauma of reorganization. As a result, the cabinet is using data to understand and analyze students' relative achievement and progress. This knowledge, in turn, guides planning decisions.

The school is implementing its periodic assessments in a clear and methodical way. The staff, a mix of new and mostly very experienced teachers, is using new systems to track students' progress, generally effectively. These systems are not yet working with a consistently high quality but most teachers integrate information from data into their work to inform their instruction and this is raising achievement. Teachers now recognize the value of assessment to gauge the impact of their instruction. Medium and long term planning is, as yet, insufficiently focused.

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 has made knowledge and use of student data a priority during this academic year. As a result, workable systems have been established at both administration and classroom level. The school has made good progress in encouraging experienced teachers to use new systems of data analysis. Most teachers are now comfortable with the process. The principal analyzes data efficiently to track and to compare the progress of students individually, in classes and within and across grades. Baseline information is established for all students each year and regular assessments follow to monitor performance. Consequently the principal knows the students' progress well. School data demonstrates a clearly rising profile of achievement overall and that each grade is making ongoing annual progress. The principal compares the school's performance with other empowerment schools where it is applicable to measure his own school's progress.

The systems and their use for managing assessment are not fully developed, nor are they consistent across all classrooms. Technology is not used generally. However, teachers do use, for example, the Princeton Review data appropriately to understand their students' progress. They maintain class binders that include the students' progress in regular assessments and conferencing information. The level of detail in teachers' assessment binders is not all of a consistently high enough quality. Individual student portfolios generally illustrate progress effectively through assessment records, annotated samples and rubrics.

The progress of English language learners and special education students is carefully monitored through systematic review of records by the special needs team. There is effective oversight of English language learners. The school does not currently analyze the achievements of students by ethnicity, gender or other subgroups, and this is a weakness within the system. The school does, however, use test assessment and class work well to identify high achieving students to link these students to opportunities to accelerate learning.

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.

At class level, data collated from; observation, conference records, formal assessment and quizzes, is used generally well to inform instruction and identify students’ next learning steps. As a result, student achievement is rising overall. Students, who are performing well academically, are linked to partnership organizations to accelerate their academic progress even further, aiming to gain admission to prestigious high schools. However, the school does not make sufficient use of the information of the progress of these students to plan accordingly week to week. On the other hand some faculties plan successfully, for example, students, who are gifted in poetry, are particularly well encouraged. Their work is truly outstanding as their performances and success in City and national competitions testifies. The school has a strong focus to raise the standards of students at level 1 and their number is significantly reducing as this positive approach takes effect through the school.

Teachers write personal goals including their class objectives but these are often generic and do not specify progress based upon previous student achievements. Grade and subject teams use curriculum maps appropriately to plan lessons and schedules for next units of work. Conversations generally are biased to curriculum content rather than focusing how to raise student achievement and this is a weakness of the process. In better practice, departmental teams evaluate the use and validity of data from some assessments as guides to planning. Coaches and subject leaders have student goals related to their responsibilities but the criteria for success are often insufficiently clear to make objective judgments of progress. This weakness is equally a feature of whole school planning within the Comprehensive Education Plan and the principal’s review.

The principal encourages high expectations through his visible presence around the school, which results in significant accountability for all. This presence serves to fuse the commitment of staff and students to the school’s founding principles and to the current goals to raise achievement. Student awareness of test ‘scale scores’, the use of portfolio data and conferencing increasingly point out their next steps in learning. Increasingly, students have their work stored on ‘memory sticks’, and this raises their personal desire for success. Participation in competitions for poetry and ‘Court Room’ debates, in both of which the school is very successful, raises students’ aspirations. Parental involvement in the school and planning for their children is actively encouraged but the school achieves a very low level of response.

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.

Appropriately detailed curriculum maps and calendars meet the requirements of the mandated curriculum and provide a means to check the progress of teachers’ and students’ work towards the school’s goals. Teachers are held to account through observation by members of the administration and by regular review of their classes’ performance in assessments. The school demonstrates the results of its periodic assessments in a clear and methodical way through graphic displays of classes’ performance and attendance on bulletin boards. This raises teachers’ and students’ awareness of the relative success of classes and instills a competitive sense.

Most teachers work hard to match instruction to each student’s needs through individual contact and conferencing. They know their students well. There is a high level of mutual respect between staff and students. Students have confidence to talk freely with teachers, staff and counselors about any issues that arise. Teachers use programs effectively and responsively and as a result there is a high level of student engagement in lessons. Many teachers are particularly effective in the mini-lesson element of the workshop model of instruction and students benefit from this. Some teachers use their data more effectively than others to group students and to plan work at different levels of challenge for individuals or groups of students. The latter, as yet, is not a widely established practice and therefore differentiation in instruction and challenge to some students is limited. There is, however, increased opportunity for students to work independently, on, for example, science projects. The literacy coach has planned extended use of ‘accountable talk’ to enable students to demonstrate their understandings and to be more actively engaged.

The principal uses the school budget efficiently. The school plans to raise achievement of English language learners, who are often students achieving at level 1, has proved effective through the creation and scheduling of additional after school and Saturday classes. Data of successful instruction is guiding decisions to ‘loop’ teachers to move forward with their classes. Attendance data demonstrates the school average to be in line with that City schools and above that of similar schools. The school recognizes that it does not undertake sufficient analysis to identify how to raise these levels further.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The principal’s recent hiring policy for cabinet and faculty members is clearly in line with the school goal for data driven instruction. The literacy coach uses the information from the Princeton Review effectively to guide the work of her team. A new teacher demonstrated good use of her data to differentiate her lesson and as a result students were comfortably on task. Professional development is appropriately based on teachers’ and students’ identified needs. Recognizing that new practices can be challenging to experienced teachers, the principal has ensured that Princeton Review, a keynote assessment for the school, should be firmly established. A consultant was hired over five sessions and this has resulted in generally good understanding of how to use the program and resulting data. Teachers are helped to develop their libraries, which are leveled to

enable benchmarking of student progress. Modeling of lessons by, for example, the literacy coach, assists peer and self-evaluation.

The principal knows his staff well and identifies points for improvement. Steadily changing practices illustrate the impact of this knowledge and his capacity to bring about change. He is well respected for his involvement in the day-to-day work of the school and spends significant proportions of his time in and around classrooms. As a result teachers and students are given regular support in their work, the school is harmonious and routines run very smoothly. This constructive working atmosphere is promoted by the work of the cabinet. Their engagement in the various school teams enables more effective communication, particularly of data and encourages better understanding and more rigorous evaluation. The school has sensibly identified a need for a data committee to assist with the next steps in this management.

The school extends the support of students academic progress very effectively through the after school community based organizations and the Saturday academies. As a result, level 1 students make better progress and high achieving students are given both challenge and greater opportunities for academic acceleration through external programs.

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 school's assessment program ensures that student progress is regularly monitored and evaluated. However, these assessments are not formally integrated into the planning to provide benchmarks of success for interim and final goals. Success criteria are not sufficiently measured. Steps towards objectives are not clearly scheduled to give indicators of the progress of plans. Progress of the school's general plans to promote student achievement is effectively evaluated through the analysis of class data within and across grades at each assessment point. As a result plans are amended. The quality of eighth grade science exit projects has led to all grades undertaking similar work to better prepare students and improve the quality of outcomes.

The school is reviewing and adjusting the mathematics and English language arts curriculum maps and pacing calendars in response to the changing student demographics. The school has demonstrated flexibility in strategic planning partly as a result of the school reorganization but also to account for the higher accountability implicit in extended data analysis. Consequently the school leadership is identifying aspects for change and beginning to plan accordingly.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Arturo Toscaninni School (JHS 145)	∅	✓	+
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	