



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Arturo Toscanini

Elementary School 216

**350 Avenue X
Brooklyn
NY 11223**

Principal: Celia Kaplinsky

Dates of review: November 28 - 29, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Richard Woolf

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Arturo Toscanini is an elementary school with 425 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 7% Black, 17% Hispanic, 56.5% White, and 19.5% Asian students. The student body includes 16.5% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 93.4%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 64% eligibility.

The school is currently undergoing major construction work to repair the roof and windows. The school has had no library for two years as it awaits the construction of a new state-of-the-art facility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school is led by a strong principal whose influence and personality is evident throughout the entire building as a positive force for change.
- The principal is very well supported by an assistant principal and staff who collectively demonstrate professional standards of the highest quality.
- The school uses data very effectively to inform and direct all aspects of its work.
- The school curriculum is engaging and further enhanced by a first-rate arts and enrichment program.
- Teachers benefit from a strong professional development program, clearly aligned to improving teaching and learning.
- Students are exceptionally well behaved and polite and demonstrate an eagerness to learn.
- The classrooms are vibrant and conducive to learning.
- The parents fully support and appreciate the staff's hard work in educating themselves and their children.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to provide an in-depth analysis of the differences in the achievement and progress of the school's ethnic groups in order to design specific programs to meet their changing needs.
- Extend further the work currently undertaken to make comparisons against similar and peer schools.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

The students of this school are fortunate to begin their educational journey within a secure and caring learning environment. It is evident the school aims to find different and exciting ways to engage its students so they have the opportunities to maximize their potential. The school provides its students with a broad and engaging curriculum acknowledged by the whole school community as being a strength. The extensive use of data directs and determines how teachers work with their students. Every student is encouraged to participate in a range of activities clearly planned to develop themselves to become better learners. Students speak highly of their teachers and state they will be sorry to leave when the time comes. One grade 5 student said, "The teachers are always here for us and we do not know if our next school will give us the same support and challenge". The parents share similar sentiments. It is a credit to the leadership that a school which has appointed only five teachers over the last five years has a staff so committed and engaged in the students' learning. The professional development program is a testimony to this as it has energized the veteran teachers in a non threatening way to embrace new teaching techniques. The school accepts the areas for improvement are beneficial to move them further forward and afford the staff the opportunity to conduct significant pieces of action research.

The school has made good progress since the last Quality Review particularly in the areas of benchmarking, formalizing meeting structures at grade levels and further developing the enrichment program to include grade 3 students. The work of the inquiry team has begun and the identification of its target groups taken place. The school is looking into developing an in-depth working partnership with the parents of their focus group with the view of supporting them, as learners, at the same time as their children.

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 the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The principal uses a vast array of data, which she holds centrally to use with her staff. This incorporates data generated from external sources and supplemented by copious in-house data. There is clear evidence to demonstrate that all staff are using this to inform and impact upon learning thereby ensuring students make progress.

Staff use data very effectively in the setting of targets and next-step learning goals for individual students outcomes across all grade levels. This is particularly so for special education students and English language learners. The data consistently informs staff of the best teaching methods and approaches to use with these groups. The school has put in place systems to look at how to improve the outcomes of its ethnic and gender groupings. However, it does not yet analyze this data with the same rigor as other aspects of its work. The school agrees that it does not make a sufficiently deep analysis of data comparing itself with its peer or similar schools to enable it to improve its overall outcomes. The school devises its own data sheets to provide each parent with regularly updated information on the progress their children are making in reading. The staff are receiving extensive training in the latest data systems. Already there is significant evidence to show how this data is improving the teachers' work in providing students with more individualized learning and being able to track progress over time. The school uses data to very good effect as a positive force for change.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

A key feature of the school's planning and goal-setting process is the collaboration undertaken by staff and parents. This is a rigorous process and seen by the entire school community as important in moving the school forward. The overarching aim is for each student to make a minimum of one-year's progress. Bi-monthly reviews of the goals by the administration are undertaken and adjustments made where necessary. Each grade level has a higher achieving class as well as groups for special education students and English language learners. Staff meet regularly to discuss individual students as well as whole grade levels to determine the best strategies to improve student achievement. The monthly meeting of the academic intervention services team is a good example of this.

There are excellent channels of communications across the whole school community to share and discuss goals and the impact they have on student learning. Workshops provide a good forum to give parents the explanation of new initiatives and inform them of how best they can help their child improve their learning. Parents are given regular information on the progress of their children, for example, through the grade level reading standards chart issued three times a year. This clearly states the starting level for each child, its goal for the year and the progress being made in achieving the target. This type of information is proving to be an extremely effective tool in raising student reading levels. Parents are encouraged to participate in the, "tea meetings", where twice per year they are invited to sit in class with their child and observe lessons. This is a growing feature of the school's work as staff and parents work together to demonstrate to each student the importance and value they place on education.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school works extremely hard to make sure its curriculum is engaging and challenging for all its students. The Teachers College approach to curriculum delivery proves very

effective and all subjects adopt its methods. This affords a consistency of approach which staff welcome. They plan their work meticulously using a range of data the school generates. The increasing use of the Acuity system further supports this, as was observed in a grade 4 collaborative team teaching class. The school further develops each child by the addition of a first-class arts curriculum that includes fine art, art appreciation, music and dance. This exposure is held in high esteem by both students and parents, as is the weekly Schoolwide Enrichment Academies. These allow all students in grade levels 3-5 a free choice of activities covering a range of subjects from chocolate making to learning sign language.

The principal leads a highly knowledgeable, professional staff. As a faculty, they constantly seek ways of improving their practice. An outcome of this has been the degree of challenge each teacher is set by the principal to improve the achievements of individual students and whole classes. Progress checks are made on a two-month cycle. Each teacher accounts for the progress their students make as a direct result of their teaching and the additional services they initiate to support them. Differentiation is well established within the classroom and teachers make good use of data to plan their lessons in supporting students' specific needs. The school has many incentive schemes in place to reward hard work, high achievement and helping those who are less fortunate. The school displays a calm, welcoming atmosphere born out of the respect adults and students show for each other. The school works very hard on maintaining and improving attendance rates as the staff appreciates how important it is to strive for every student to attend daily.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school is very pro-active in the way it manages its professional development programs to enhance the students' learning opportunities. There are clear systems to encourage staff participation and differentiated programs to meet individual teacher need. The principal herself attends the Teachers College monthly in order to stay abreast of current developments.

The principal and her assistant principal have a clear insight into the performance of each teacher. They both undertake formal and informal observations and staff welcome the immediate feedback they are given. The numerous opportunities the staff has to meet within grade levels and across subjects are welcomed and appreciated by them. Teachers College supplies additional professional development resources in the form of two days staff developer support. The school has a very stable staff which has, in itself, presented some challenges. However, through careful management and the provision of targeted and exciting professional development programs the principal has successfully engaged all teachers in embracing new elements of the curriculum. Staff willingly acknowledge the need for continuous improvement and enjoy the freedoms afforded to them to be involved in decision making and take on additional responsibilities. The excellent work of the psychologist, guidance counselor and social worker to support the students is of the highest order. The school continues to utilize a growing number of outside organizations who support them in achieving their goals. One such group, Principal for a Day, is in the process of raising over \$180,000 to rebuild and extend the stage in the auditorium to expand the already successful arts program.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school has a great deal of expertise and experience in using data as a means of setting realistic goals across all elements of the school community. Verification of progress in the achievement of these goals takes place at regular intervals throughout the year. The "Benchmark Monitoring for Results" supports this, as staff are required to make regular progress returns to the principal. The principal conferences individually with every teacher to revisit and realign their targets. Information collated from these meetings forms part of the database the principal uses in developing plans for the coming school year. The entire staff contributes to the yearly planning cycle as part of a collaborative process. The principal welcomes and appreciates the contributions parents make to the school's plans.

The school uses a wealth of interim data to demonstrate the growth of individual students as they progress to achieving their yearly targets. Measures are taken immediately to address any deficiencies that may be identified by this close analysis. The administration and staff are using the Acuity system with ever-growing confidence as a means of highlighting specific areas of concern and demonstrating where teaching strategies are successful. They have identified good planning as key to the continuing development of the school. The principal has a very clear vision for the school's future. It permeates throughout the whole building and is endorsed by the teachers, staff and students.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Arturo Toscanini School	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
Quality Score				X	

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

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?			X		
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?			X		
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X	

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.
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To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?				X	
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?				X	
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?					X
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?				X	
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?					X
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other's classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another's instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4				X	

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school's plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.2 the school's plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?			X		
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?				X	
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?				X	
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan's interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?				X	
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X	