



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

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



# **Quality Review Report**

**TAG Young Scholars**

**Elementary/Middle School 012**

**240 East 109 Street  
New York  
NY 10039**

**Principal: Janette Cesar**

**Dates of review: March 24 - 25, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Bruce Berry**

## Content of the report

### **Part 1: The School Context**

Information about the school

### **Part 2: Overview**

What the school does well  
What the school needs to improve

### **Part 3: Main Findings**

Progress made since the last review  
Overall evaluation  
How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

### **Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

TAG Young Scholars is an elementary/middle school with 454 students from kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 61% Black, 31% Hispanic, 2% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes no English language learners and no special education students. Boys account for 41% of the students enrolled and girls account for 59%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 -2007 was 94.1%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal's excellent leadership is providing the drive and vision for the continuous school improvement agenda.
- The school makes excellent use of an exemplary data system to monitor student progress.
- Teachers use data very well to plan their instruction and to identify areas of improvement for individual and groups of students.
- The curriculum provides an exciting range of courses, including a strong arts component, which are creating high levels of challenge and interest for student learning.
- Elective and enrichment programs provide opportunities for the students to further develop their problem solving and higher order thinking skills.
- Instructional activities create very good student engagement and are well matched to students identified learning needs.
- Excellent communications with parents create high levels of involvement in their children's learning.
- The high-quality professional development programs provide a wide range of opportunities for teachers to improve their skills and to share good practice.
- Senior leaders use the data systems effectively to periodically monitor student outcomes, as measured against identified benchmarks for improvement.
- There is a very caring and respectful culture throughout the school, which creates a supportive environment for student learning.

### What the school needs to improve

- Further improve the collaboration between teachers in setting classroom, grade and subject goals based on students' present and projected outcomes.
- Ensure that teacher outcomes have periodic benchmarks to monitor their success and are strategically aligned to the projected outcomes of their students.
- Create more consistency in setting student goals to ensure that they have a clear understanding and ownership of their next steps for learning.
- Further improve the communication and sharing of school goals with all members of the school community.

## 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.**

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

Since the last school Quality Review, good progress has been made in developing vertical planning across the grades, the use of technology within instruction and learning activities and the use of periodic assessments at all levels throughout the school. The principal provides excellent leadership in driving the vision of continually improving student achievement, to good effect. The school has developed excellent practices and systems for monitoring the progress of students and teachers make effective use of the outcomes of data analysis to plan and differentiate their instruction and learning activities. Exceptional curriculum and enrichment provision creates high levels of challenge and interest for the students and this has a positive impact on the quality of their learning. The school has developed very good communications and relationships with parents, which have resulted in high levels of participation in the life of the school. A wide and varied range of collaborative professional development activities creates excellent opportunities for teachers to share ideas and learn new skills. The school is an orderly, caring and respectful environment for student learning. There is not yet consistency in collaboratively goal setting at individual student, classroom, grade and subject levels. The inquiry team has established a research project based on grade 8 students' writing performance.

**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 senior leaders and the teachers make excellent use of the exemplary data systems for tracking the progress of student achievement. The teachers receive effective training in the use of data and are confident in using it to monitor student progress. Multiple assessment indicators are used very well to identify specific strengths and areas in need of further improvement for individual and groups of students. ECLAS assessments provide valuable data on student reading levels, which are monitored against expected benchmarks throughout the year. Tests, quizzes, Acuity predictive tests and teacher assessments provide an array of data, which are all used effectively to inform instruction, differentiate learning activities and plan interventions. The teachers make good use of technology to enhance their knowledge of student progress and to provide differentiated learning activities. For example, a commercially produced computer program is used well with kindergarten through grade 3 students and provides instant feedback on

student groupings for the next stage of learning. Higher achieving students are accelerated to the next grade curriculum standards to provide them with greater levels of challenge. Many students also take and are successful in Regents tests. There are no special education students and no English language learners in the school.

The school is using data effectively to target specific subgroups where differences in achievement are identified. For example, tutoring groups for girls provide excellent project-based activities to raise their interest and achievement levels in math and high interest books for boys are purchased to encourage them to be more active readers. The previous year's data is used as a benchmark on which to build student improvement. The school uses its tracking system effectively to monitor its progress in-year and across years to ensure that the focus is on continual improvement. It has invaluable links with other gifted and talented schools in order to observe and share best practice. The principals meet regularly to discuss the curriculum and instruction in their establishments. The teachers make valuable visits with a focus on specific instructional practices. Joint professional development sessions with other schools provide excellent opportunities to share best practice and to learn from one another.

**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 proficient.**

The school has challenging goals for improving the reading levels of all students, with defined periodic benchmarks against which to measure student progress. However, there is inconsistency in the collaboration between teachers in setting classroom, grade and subject goals based on students' present and projected outcomes in other subjects. Senior leaders and teachers review the progress of each student on a monthly basis. The teachers plan differentiated instruction and interventions based on the outcomes of these reviews. Some teachers set goals for students, but there is inconsistency in students' understanding and ownership of their next steps of learning. There are excellent procedures in place for supporting the students who are in most need of improvement. Plans and interventions for individual students are agreed at the monthly review sessions. They receive extra help in the after-school program and the coaches make classroom visits to assess individual children's progress when necessary. The school goals are shared with the school community, but are not yet fully embraced and understood by some of the community.

Very high expectations are generated by the principal, the teachers and the students and are fully supported by the parents. As one student said, "The school is helping us prepare for the future". There are excellent communications with parents, which keeps them fully updated with their children's progress in the school. Regular progress reports and conferences with teachers give parents valuable opportunities to discuss their children's achievement in all their curriculum subjects. They can also attend open house sessions where they are able to visit classrooms and observe their children's instruction and learning activities. They also have the chance to attend workshops specifically designed to help parents with issues relevant to their children and to their own lives. These include curriculum conferences, choosing a high school, health issues, dealing with depression, domestic violence and many other topics of specific relevance for the parents.

**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 provides an excellent curriculum provision, which embraces the core subjects including math, balanced literacy, social studies and science. There is an exciting range of arts, electives and Regents subjects to provide excellent challenge and interest for the gifted and talented students in the school. The excellent arts and elective courses include art, music, drama, dance, yoga and a full range of sports activities. The etiquette elective course enables students to learn their new skills in the practical setting of a restaurant. These courses are complemented by the teachers’ ability to be creative in using strategies and learning activities to enrich the students’ abilities in problem solving and higher order thinking. The teachers provide highly differentiated instruction and activities, which provides excellent learning experiences for the students. The students are flexibly grouped in each unit of study based on their levels of achievement in specific skills as identified from the data.

Budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions are made in alignment with the data outcomes. For example, the need for more non-fiction and high interest reading books for students, particularly for boys, came about as a result of trends identified from the data. A teacher was hired to increase the music provision in the school and the priority to improve literacy levels is being successfully supported by a full time literacy coach. There is a wonderfully caring and respectful culture, which permeates all aspects of life in the school. This is fully illustrated by one student who said of the teachers, “They are not just giving us the basics, they are giving us extended learning”. Good attendance is a high priority in the school and is supported well by robust procedures, together with rewards and celebrations for the students. The monthly attendance is published for each class and the top group has a dress-down day and a pizza party. Students with 100% attendance for three months receive an award and those maintaining this for a full-year receive a plaque.

**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 principal undertakes effective observations and classroom walkthroughs to ensure that instruction is engaging and providing a challenging learning experience for the students. Constructive feedback and discussions enable teachers to build on their strengths and further improve in identified areas. Valuable learning walks by senior leaders and coaches enable them to focus on the alignment of the instruction to the professional teaching standards. The school has a highly developed program of good quality training, which provides a framework for teachers to grow in their professional expertise. Professional development goals are agreed with each teacher at the start of the year and a full profile of their training is logged. The whole staff is involved in a major training project to enhance their knowledge and understanding of all the different features of how students learn. The teachers work extremely well in teams to plan their curriculum and instruction and to share good practice. They have common preparation

time together and grade team meetings with coaches occur weekly. There are also regular meetings with teachers in the grades above and below to ensure continuity of educational experience for the students. Teachers have many valuable opportunities to visit each other's classrooms to share good practice. They also visit other gifted and talented schools to get further ideas to enhance the provision for their students. New teachers receive excellent support and guidance from their mentor, together with very good support from the senior leaders and coaches.

There is an effective program of guidance and advice to support the students' academic and personal development. There is an admirable life skills curriculum, which promotes the students' health and social development. It includes topics such as self-esteem, conflict resolution, HIV AIDS, drug prevention and many other issues relevant to the students' development. All grade 8 students undertake 40 hours of community service as part of their graduation requirements. The school is an extremely well organized and orderly community, where students demonstrate very high levels of self-discipline. It also engages in a wide range of partnerships to provide exciting enrichments for the students. These include the Younger Entrepreneurs, where a group of students work towards establishing a business. Other organizations contribute to a range of valuable academic, sporting and artistic enrichments.

**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 rigorous plans and processes in place for monitoring student outcomes. Senior leaders undertake very effective monthly benchmark reviews of all student data to monitor the progress of each student, classroom, grade and subject. This is followed by valuable meetings with individual teachers to discuss the progress of the students in each class. Action plans are agreed for each student in need of further improvement and intervention programs are arranged. The senior leaders' monthly meeting with each teacher is also effective in monitoring the teachers' progress in improving their students' achievement. However, there is inconsistency in the teachers' involvement in setting whole school improvement goals. This is detrimental in ensuring the necessary rigor in measuring their impact on the projected outcomes of their students. However, the teachers use periodic assessments in a highly effective way to review the impact of their curriculum and instruction on student achievement. They work together to immediately adjust the curriculum, instruction and plan interventions to meet the changing needs of the students, as identified from the data.

The principal makes effective use of data to take strategic decisions in adjusting plans and goals. For example, classroom libraries were improved to provide more non-fiction and high-interest books for boys to improve their literacy levels. There is an effective cycle of reviewing and planning, which embraces all the staff of the school. The teachers work together to review the impact of their curriculum and instruction. They then produce curriculum maps and pacing calendars for the following year. The whole school community shares a vision of providing a high quality, challenging and enriching learning environment for the highly gifted students in the school. One person summed up the feelings of all the parent community by describing the school as "A jewel in Spanish Harlem".

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: TAG Young Scholars</b>	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>				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? N/A	*	*	*	*	*
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners? N/A	*	*	*	*	*
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				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.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, 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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			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 and tardiness?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				X	

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>					X

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent do . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>					X

**\* Not scored due to the absence of this population at the school**

◇	<b>Outstanding</b>
+	<b>Well Developed</b>
✓	<b>Proficient</b>
➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>