



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Ballet Tech, NYC Public School for Dance

Elementary-High School 442

**890 Broadway
New York
NY 10003**

Principal: John Treadwell

Dates of review: February 13 - 14, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Jo Cheadle

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Ballet Tech is an elementary-high school with 161 students from grade 4 through grade 12. The school population comprises 47.2% Black, 23.6% Hispanic, 15.3% White, and 13.4% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learner and two 2% special education students. Boys account for 39% of the students enrolled and girls account for 61%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 95.1%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Students are chosen for the school based on their dancing ability, via school based auditions throughout New York City and open auditions at the Ballet Tech site. By the end of grade 5, students are offered places at the middle school, once again based on their dancing skills. High school students receive academic instruction at one of two linked high schools, Manhattan Village Academy and School for the Future, but attend the main building for dance lessons every day.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides a clarity of vision and calm, purposeful and professional leadership, creating a very positive climate for learning.
- High expectations are very evident and students and teachers alike are challenged and held accountable.
- The school has a collegiate atmosphere and adults are effective role models for the development of responsibility and respect in students.
- The school's curriculum is excellent and incorporates integrated subjects that are meaningful and relevant to students.
- Very good use is made of data to create whole school goals for student outcomes that are timed, measurable and regularly monitored.
- The principal and all teachers have impeccable knowledge of individual students and their family contexts, which supports learning well.
- Teaching is of high quality because instruction is matched well to student needs and is motivating and engaging.
- Teachers make very good use of ongoing formative assessment to drive teaching and ensure effective learning.
- The school involves parents regularly and meaningfully in its work to support student achievements.
- The attention to academic rigor is in equal balance to students' personal and social development.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that "next step" goals are consistently shared with students and their parents.
- Improve the collation of data to ensure easy access, analysis and monitoring and demonstrate the effectiveness of the curriculum and instruction.
- Expand the use of technology to support better match of teaching methods to learning styles.

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 principal of Ballet Tech communicates his vision for the school with absolute clarity. Under his leadership, students experience utmost academic rigor alongside the wonderful opportunity to learn the ballet art form to a very high level. At this school, these disciplines complement each other extremely well because all teachers work very hard to establish central skills that are essential to good learning. For this reason, students at Ballet Tech are motivated and proud of what they do well. They know where they must improve, understand why discipline is important, gain high levels of confidence, present themselves courteously and persevere to reach excellence. Students and teachers are aware that expectations are very high. Students arrive at the school with very varying levels of academic ability. The pressure is on to meet individual needs quickly and effectively because students spend a good proportion of each day in ballet classes. Teachers know that they must respond immediately to indications that student progress is slowing or that they have not understood new concepts well enough. They do this successfully because there are well-established systems for regularly assessing student work to inform the next steps in learning. Moreover, the principal cares deeply about each student, has an excellent overview of their achievements and closely monitors all intervention strategies to ensure that progress is steady and continuous. The result is that students do well at this school. Students are confident that even when their dancing skills do not meet the standards required to extend their time at the school, they gain academic skills and knowledge that serve them very well in other schools and in their future lives. Test results show clear evidence of student progress. However, not enough use of this evidence to exemplify just how successful individual subgroups of students are and to support the school in explaining why its systems, programs and style of education are very effective.

The work of the inquiry team supports the close attention to student needs very well. All members have received ARIS training, which has supported the team in identifying a target group of students. The team has made good use of ACUITY, predictive tests and a range of diagnostic tools to gather further information about the group. They have agreed on intervention strategies and monitoring periods over the coming weeks.

The school has made good progress since the last quality review. Strategic planning for school development is very well organized. All plans have clear timeframes for implementation and measurable success criteria to evaluate progress towards goals. Teachers make very effective use of formative and summative data to plan for student learning. Colleagues work in very close partnership and learn from each other. While the school is very small and there is little flexibility in scheduling, there are increased opportunities for teachers to observe each other's practice.

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.

As a small school, the principal and his team have every opportunity to get to know students very well. Even so, adults make a concerted effort to go a step further with the result that they have exceptional knowledge of each individual. Because students arrive in grade 4, there is often very little documented information regarding their past achievements. The school recognizes that it is imperative to begin immediate collection of data to inform planning for learning. This is even more important as some students may only stay at the school for two years. There is a commitment to ensuring that this group of students will gain effectively in this short period of time and move confidently on to new schools. The school collects a wide spread of data that is used effectively to track progress and inform instruction. Data is thoroughly analyzed and progress for every student monitored very regularly.

Even though there are small numbers of special education students and English language learners, attention to their progress is very good. The success of intervention strategies for special education students is measured closely and adapted as necessary. There is detailed focus on the gains made by all students who speak English as an additional language, even though they may already have proficient skills. The principal evaluates progress over time very carefully and measures the school's success from year to year. He regularly uses data to compare the school's outcomes with other schools. These comparisons show the school's successes clearly. This analysis is not presented in a way that shows the school's accomplishments with subgroups that may not do as well in other schools across the City. Of particular note is the achievement of Black boys. This important data highlights significant outcomes very pertinent to this school, which could inform the practice of other schools. As data collection grows and is used with increasing effect to inform all aspects of the school's work, there is recognition that it should be more easily accessible to staff. The school is now working on computerized collation systems that facilitate a quick overview and easy tracking of progress for each student, by subject, within grades and for particular teachers.

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.

Expectations at the school are extremely high, not only in terms of student and teachers outcomes, but also in terms of timeframes for achievement. Whole school improvement goals are exceptionally clear to all staff and they are very aware of how their individual work must influence overall school performance. They have a very clear understanding for which individuals and subgroups, and in which subjects improvements are needed. With this in mind, using a full data set, staff work in close collaboration to set very specific goals for students that encourage good progress towards long-term targets. While students have a clear understanding of what is ultimately expected of them, they

are not always able to articulate “next step” goals that would indicate interim progress towards final outcomes. Similarly, parents do not always know the specifics of those steps that would help them to provide effective support at home.

In most respects, the school has very good lines of communication with parents, providing them with updates on their child’s progress at six points during the year. The principal meets with individual parents on a regular basis to discuss progress and parents are in no doubt of how well their child is doing. The principal believes wholeheartedly that parental contribution is a significant fact affecting student progress. Parents are invited to school on a regular basis and the majority of parents support the school’s efforts to improve learning. This involves regular negotiation for collection from school following after-school academic programs, as most students live at some distance. The parent coordinator plays a vital role in communication with parents. They are particularly impressed by the school’s “honor role”, which takes place at the end of each marking period and where students and parents alike receive congratulations.

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 has a very effective core curriculum that facilitates regularly assessment to monitor progress and inform planning. Programs, scheduling and innovative ideas encourage good learning and successful outcomes. Teachers work very closely to ensure consistency in planning the curriculum and instruction. They work to integrate learning across subjects to ensure that students understand connections and recognize the relevance of what they learn. Students thoroughly enjoy this well-planned curriculum. During the Quality Review, grade 7 students presented the results of an art, science and English language arts combined project concerned with the environment. Their life size “super characters” were the culmination of learning about environmental issues, weather patterns and human responses to global warning. They used a range of art skills, both two- and three-dimensional, to create a super hero or enemy of the environment. Their written work and oral presentations exemplified their new scientific knowledge and enabled progress in writing and presentation skills. Grade 4 students visited the presentation and evaluated each piece of work according to set criteria. This type of integrated project is common to the school’s practice and there are very good examples of students’ work around the school.

The curriculum also exemplifies the school high expectations for student outcomes. Students who are ready to take Regents math exams do so in grade 7. Many are successful at this stage, but most importantly the school then uses test results as the benchmark for setting improvement goals. Having analyzed previous papers and worked on gaps in understanding, students take the exams again, trying to improve on their previous score. Students are very motivated by this incentive to learn and do better. Teachers instill very strong “I can” ideals in students, beliefs that are further consolidated through the dance curriculum, which develops self-discipline and confidence. Further use of technology to support both learning and teaching is a planned to extend and enhance already very good programming.

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.

In the same way that the principal knows each individual student, he also knows his staff very well. His regular walkthroughs enable daily snapshots of practice throughout the school and he is clearly knowledgeable about the strengths of his team. He is equally aware of where improvements are necessary and staff welcome his feedback and the opportunities he facilitates to develop their practice. As a small school, professional development opportunities are limited by budget constraints and lack of flexibility in scheduling cover for classes. However, the school does all it can to enable staff to work together, learn from each other and attend courses that are relevant to individual needs and the achievement of whole school goals. Since the last Quality Review, the principal has provided cover to enable staff to observe teaching in other classes, work with consultants and attend training. New teachers are effectively supported by their colleagues and the principal, but also receive advice from an outside mentor employed on a part-time basis by the school. Staff are appreciative of the opportunities to work with partners to develop their practice. Instruction in math has improved with the support of outside consultants over an extended period of time. The school capitalizes on partnerships to enhance its work. There are good relationships with both high schools linked to Ballet Tech that enable open communication regarding individual students. This enables the principal and staff to support students' academic, social and personal development even when they move to grade 10. The school's guidance counselor facilitates ongoing support for individuals when necessary. She works in close contact with the student and their family when there are identified issues with academic progress that may be the result of emotional or contextual problems. At all levels, students are supported to ensure that they achieve as well as they can.

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 is highly reflective of its practice, affording regular opportunities to rigorously review the progress towards established goals for overall school improvement. To very good effect, the school uses a range of tools and measures to evaluate success and consequently refine goals and action plans. The principal has focused carefully on the needs indicated by serious analysis of results over time and the calculation of student progress gains. Regular interim evaluations dictate whether a previous whole school focus is still weighty enough to be a continued priority or if the school should change its route to success. This serious attention to ongoing self-evaluation, monitoring and revision encourages the school to improve continuously. The extremely clear vision for the overall outcomes, firm in the principal's mind and shared by all members of staff, is the essential driver in the school's work.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Ballet Tech	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.

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	
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 and tardiness?				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, 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	
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

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped