



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Tompkins Square Middle School**

**Middle School 839**

**600 East 6 Street  
New York  
NY 10009**

**Principal: Mark Pingitore**

**Dates of review: February 13 – 14, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Anne Evanoff**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Tompkins Square Middle School is a middle school with 365 students from grades 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 14% Black, 44% Hispanic, 16% White, and 25% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 94.9%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 60% eligibility.

The school is located on the third floor of a building that houses two other schools. The school is proud of its cultural diversity and its ability to create a family atmosphere for a variety of ethnic groups.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal and staff share a very clear vision for the school that celebrates the school's diversity and nurtures the whole child.
- The school is a joyous and challenging learning environment where the core values of partnership, rigor and dedication inspire all stakeholders.
- The school has developed effective structures for gathering and analyzing performance data in order to plan more strategically for all students.
- The school operates on the premise of shared and distributive leadership where collaboration, facilitation and student success are highly considered.
- The administrative team provides ongoing support for all teachers to grow professionally and holds staff accountable for teaching and learning.
- The school provides an exceptionally broad and compelling curriculum, including the arts, to extend learning and challenge students.
- The school compares its performance to similar schools and visits other high achieving schools to identify effective practices that make a difference.
- There is mutual trust and respect in the school among staff, students, parents and administrators that lead to open and honest communication.
- Administration and staff have high expectations of students' learning that focuses on academic achievement and positive behavior.
- The administrative team has developed policies and procedures that allow the school to operate effectively and efficiently.

### What the school needs to improve

- Further develop the school-wide initiative on goal setting and focus on sharing whole-school goals with all stakeholders to improve student outcomes.
- Establish interim goals for student and teacher outcomes to better measure the impact on learning when specific instructional strategies are used.
- Involve students in setting specific goals for improvement in the core subjects and invite parents to support their children in achieving these goals.
- Provide ongoing professional development and training to build consistency in teacher use of student data and the differentiation of instruction.

## 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 school was founded six years ago and the administration and faculty continue to work collaboratively to create a culturally diverse, stimulating and challenging environment for students. The school prides itself on its philosophy of developing “the whole child” in a context of acceptance and support. The principal and staff very efficiently gather a wide range of information to better understand what their students can and cannot do. They use this data effectively to plan lessons and to ensure that students make progress. Teachers use the Understanding by Design Framework for cooperative curriculum planning. This positions the school well for providing an interesting project-based learning focus where students demonstrate that they “got what was taught” in the form of challenging projects.

Parents and students are highly supportive of the vision of the principal and faculty and acknowledge that high standards and expectations challenge all students to reach higher. The school has yet to align its strategic planning through sharing whole-school goals, and developing student goals related to specific skills sets within the core subjects. It has also still to establish interim goals against which to measure both student and teacher outcomes. The principal has identified goal setting as an important next step for the entire school, which requires school-wide collaboration. Although the curriculum is broad and engaging across the grades, the school continues to develop exemplars for what good work looks like at level four so that students have a clear understanding. The principal and staff are also endeavoring to identify effective practices in the teaching of reading strategies that have the highest impact on developing student comprehension. The school is determined to improve the performance of all students who did not make a year’s progress last year in language arts. The school has a history of making steady progress with all subgroups.

The school has made good progress in implementing the recommendations from the last Quality Review. It is identifying and addressing the needs of students who require additional support, continuing to examine trends in the data for different ethnic groups and providing academic intervention strategies across the grades. The inquiry team has selected its focus group and is implementing strategies that improve learning.

### **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 school is dedicated to gathering and collecting data to better understand the learning needs of all students. The principal analyzes and organizes student information from State tests and other school assessments and shares the trends and patterns with staff to inform the decision-making processes. The principal is currently developing a comprehensive spreadsheet that will eventually allow the school to record all student information in one place for quick reference. In the meantime, the school has developed effective systems for gathering and analyzing achievement data to plan for specific groups. The support services personnel, for example, carefully review all data for students on an individual education plan. Academic intervention staff flag students who barely manage a pass or fall below and “put them on the radar” for monitoring purposes. Grade level facilitators meet with their peers across the grade to discuss students who are struggling and who require additional support, to ensure that no student falls by the wayside. The special education department has created its own tracking sheets that consistently monitor the achievement and progress of identified students. The case manager is able to regularly provide progress updates for both collaborative teaching partners and classroom teachers. The English as a second language teacher works closely with all grade teachers to ensure that lesson planning and modifications for English language learners effectively align with individual learning needs. Careful analysis of performance and attendance data enabled the school to identify several students from a particular subgroup who were not attending school on a regular basis and who were also not performing at the standard. As a result, this group has become a special focus group for the school to support and monitor.

All teachers maintain student portfolios which move with students up the grades and offer a solid baseline of student work over several years for the purposes of making comparisons among individuals, classes, and grades. The principal has been actively involved in comparing the school’s data to other schools that are similar but are achieving at higher levels in the core subjects. The school supports staff well in the use of data. However, not all members of staff are, as yet, confident in using the ARIS system.

**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.**

The school is committed to the premise of shared and distributive leadership where collaboration, facilitation and student success are highly valued. The school consistently engages in a variety of collaborative processes to closely examine its data and to set long-term goals for improving and accelerating student learning. Every year the staff participates in a retreat and identifies a renewed focus for the coming school year. This year, they identified the need to invest in additional special education teachers who work collaboratively with classroom teachers to provide small group instruction for students who have individual education plans. The inquiry team also set some specific goals for its focus group and built in some next steps that involve a one-on-one advisory teacher for each student. This approach has resulted in more effective support for the academic, emotional and social needs of each individual. The school is totally dedicated to supporting the “whole child”. The principal hired an additional special education coach this current year to manage the data for struggling students and to support classroom teachers in modifying instruction to meet the needs of students in greatest need of improvement. The faculty has created a culture of high expectations and expects all students to reach “the bar”. This information is regularly exchanged with parents. All members of staff

engage in early morning meetings, weekly faculty conferences, study meetings, and grade meetings to plan next steps and challenging learning experiences. The school has not, however, consistently shared whole-school goals with parents and students. Although some students set personal goals to improve reading, writing and math, the goals are too general and do not involve parents enough in providing additional assistance at home.

**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 a balanced literacy program and uses the Teachers’ College mini-lesson approach to English language arts instruction. However, the school does not currently use a standard interim assessment tool to regularly monitor student progress. The principal is seeking to supplement the current curriculum approach since one of the school’s goals is to improve reading comprehension so that all students make a minimum of one year’s progress. Additional data is collected through the use of a Quality Reading Inventory which is administered to lower-performing students every five weeks to track achievement. This is effectively used to identify next steps and inform planning. Intervention staff also provide a phonics-based approach using proven strategies such as Wilson. Although the majority of students have made good progress in math using “Connected Mathematics”, the principal hired a math facilitator and a technology staff developer to organize professional development opportunities and further develop leadership capacity within the staff. This has helped to reinforce effective teaching and learning practices. The faculty is held accountable for the progress and learning of all students. The principal sets clear expectations for quality instruction and provides strong support through a variety of coaches to develop teacher capacity. The school is a joyous and challenging learning environment where the core values of partnership, rigor and dedication inspire all stakeholders.

Teachers effectively plan teaching and learning that is broad and engaging and are mindful of “sparking creative thinking” and encouraging students to “feed off each other’s ideas”. The school continues to build its capacity to implement exemplary practices in differentiating instruction. The principal is highly supportive of the collaborative teaching model that has been created in the school since he believes that shared leadership in modeling good teaching practices leads to more highly effective instruction. The school is committed to providing “pedagogical excellence” and continues to grow in that direction. There is a high degree of mutual trust and respect among stakeholders that leads to openness, transparency and supportive communication.

**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 frequently visits classrooms and observes teaching to assess its impact on student performance. He closely monitors student progress and offers feedback to staff about planning and instruction. The principal is an effective instructional leader and is also very supportive of new teachers. He is working with teachers to improve goal setting for further school development. A priority is to achieve greater alignment among whole-

school, classroom, individual student and professional development goals, including the establishment of clear targets and focused next steps. The faculty is highly engaged in workshop training and modeling and ongoing professional development. One initiative is the arrangement for math teachers to visit high-achieving schools to exchange ideas and practices in support of the school's action plan to offer Regents' math to its students.

The principal and faculty provide as much support as possible for students through facilitators, advisors, guidance personnel and a variety of extended day and after-school programs. This leads to greater communication and immediate follow up when difficulties arise. There are clear procedures in place so the school operates very smoothly.. To this end, the principal is approachable and accessible. Each morning, he holds a short staff meeting to update the staff and invite their input into that day's activities. This ensures that all stakeholders are on the same page and have the same information. The school's motto of "be safe, be kind, be productive" is reflective of the faculty's commitment to supporting a diverse community.

**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 proficient.**

The principal has a strong vision for the future development of the school that starts with a core set of essential questions related to individuals defining who they are in relation to the world. This vision is highly germane to the cultural diversity found in the school's learning community. He is careful to review the final student outcomes at the end of each year and "renew and refresh" the school's focus with goal setting and school improvement planning.

The school has been disadvantaged this year since they have not yet had access to any data from the City's predictive assessments to establish measurable interim goals. Instead they have had to rely on end-of-unit tests in math, and classroom assessments and running records in reading to measure growth and set individual targets. The school used the item analysis of the State test results to plan small strategy groups for addressing gaps in student learning but its use of such information to target instruction is not yet fully developed. Similarly, not all members of staff are confident in using the Acuity Toolbox to make school-based interim assessments to establish objective and measurable interim goals. This area continues to be a "work in progress" for the faculty. The principal is also taking steps to further build staff expertise around establishing interim goals for both student and teacher outcomes to better measure the impact on learning of specific instructional strategies. The strategic decision to add collaborative teaching partners to all grades with high numbers of special education students, means that this approach to goal setting is already established and this is where teachers are successfully measuring progress against a well- defined set of goals. The principal's vision is to integrate these exemplary practices throughout the school for all classes, grades, and students.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Tompkins Square Middle School</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?				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		
<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	

**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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>					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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>					X

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