



**Department of  
Education**

*Joel I. Klein, Chancellor*

**Quality Review Report  
Office of Accountability  
2008-2009**

# **Quality Review Report 2008-2009**

**Tompkins Square School**

**Middle School 839**

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

**Principal: Sonhando Estwick**

**Dates of review: March 24 - 25, 2009**

**Lead Reviewer: Timothy Behr**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Tompkins Square is a middle school with 372 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 12% Black, 43% Hispanic, 17% White, 27% Asian, and 1% American Indian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 95.5%. 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.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is proficient.**

The new principal is leading the school forward using distributive leadership to create a collaborative team mentality. The school has implemented strategies to address areas identified in need of improvement from the last Quality Review. For example, it has implemented a design-your-own assessments system to guide classroom instruction, and has provided professional development to support teachers in developing and using this strategy. However, the school does not compare the results with State exam results to determine alignment in regards to students' strengths and weaknesses to support the differentiation of instruction. The school has made progress in involving students in setting goals in core subjects and having parents support their children to achieve these goals. Well-organized staff, facilitators, and advisory faculty teams have supported the majority of this work. The principal encourages the ongoing collaboration of staff in terms of planning and goal setting. In addition, he meets with the faculty every morning for ten minutes to highlight daily events and for teachers to communicate with one another regarding classroom activities. The result is enabling the school to support its mission for all students to be ethical, caring, self-reflective, critical thinkers that have a love of learning. The school community values the collective efforts of teachers, students, support staff and parents working together to continue to move the academic programs of the school. A successful after-school program, particularly in the arts, sports, and recreation, enhances the school's curriculum.

The principal is dedicated to the goal of using specific staff members as facilitators to support on going staff development and school reform. However, outside academic professional development resources have been limited to Teacher's College. In addition, there is not yet a refined system for monitoring teaching to inform professional development decisions. This means there is not a plan to improve individual teachers' skills and knowledge over time. The school has made strategic budget and staff decisions to align resources with requirements identified through an analysis of student performance. Interim, measurable goals for sub-groups are not yet fully developed. While the school is developing skills to differentiate instruction further to meet the needs of students, the rigor and consistency is not yet systemic across all grades and content areas.

The inquiry team has used data to identify a particular student cohort whose progress has given cause for concern, but they have not disseminated their work across all staff.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school embraces the distributive leadership model and shares the principal's vision for raising achievement with the school community.
- The school has excellent information systems for keeping parents fully aware of their child's academic progress and school activities.
- The faculty works effectively in collaborative teams to share good practices, and review data to structure curriculum and instruction.
- The faculty, parents, and students share and demonstrate high expectations for improving student achievement.
- Relationships among parents, students, teachers, and the school administration are warm and respectful resulting in an environment that promotes academic and personal growth.
- The school curriculum, including extension projects and youth development activities, creates opportunities for students to grow academically, socially, and emotionally.

### What the school needs to improve

- Extend the consistency and rigor of the differentiation of instructional learning activities to provide appropriate challenges aligned to the students' identified learning needs.
- Focus analysis on the learning outcomes for the closing the Achievement Gap students so they can make exemplary gains.
- Refine lesson observation procedures to formalize individual teacher professional growth plans and maximize student learning.
- Support teachers' capacity to plan instructional activities that enable all students to reach their learning goals through professional development activities.

## Part 3: Main Findings

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

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.**

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

The implementation of the design-your-own assessment option (DYOs) for the citywide interim testing program has improved the understanding and use of data by the entire staff. A technology facilitator assists staff in enhancing the use of technology in their classroom so that they can better address students learning styles. As a result, teachers' confidence in interpreting data to evaluate their students' progress has improved rapidly over the past year. However, the school does not compare its assessments to state test results, so the school does not have a complete evaluative picture of student performance to inform classroom instruction.

The staff, students, and parents use Powerschool, an online grading and reporting system to enhance communication skills regarding student performance data. The ongoing monitoring of progress has led to reinstating the position of the math coach to support the department. The coach assists in math enrichment through small group instruction, the extended day program, and conferencing. The principal places strong emphasis upon monitoring the performance of collaborative team teaching classes and ascertaining whether the students are making progress. The school's thorough understanding of the needs of these students has led to the piloting of new teaching approaches to improve progress. Collaborative team teaching classes now have groups of six students with a collaborative team teacher, the goal being to improve students' overall growth. However, the self-contained students are not receiving the same level of instruction. Therefore, the school is not making English language arts exemplary gains with their students with disabilities population. The closing the achievement gap subgroups of English language learners and Hispanics are also not making exemplary gains in English language arts. This is an area of focus for the school.

The online grading system provides effective tracking of students from year to year, which supports discussions among teachers, students and parents, and by the transfer of student portfolios from grade to grade. These procedures ensure continuity of instruction. In addition, the school sends four progress reports to parents so that they can effectively check their child's progress with great regularity. An online homework forum enables families to review daily assignments encouraging parents to be more involved in their child's education. These excellent information systems keep parents fully aware of their child's academic progress and school activities.

**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 principal has established a collaborative culture in the school. Each year, the administration and staff work together during a retreat to discuss and identify academic concentrations for the upcoming year. Teachers and administration collaborate to optimize program decisions and goal setting for students. Each department identifies particular academic skills to improve student performance resulting in staff members improving outcomes for students that support school-wide goals.

The Comprehensive Educational Action Plan supports this collaboration by having goals that reflect the careful analysis of previous data to inform school-wide initiatives. For example, DYO's will enable the school to monitor student progress, drive curriculum instruction, and enhance instructional practices. The Understanding by Design (UBD) plans clarifies the connections between assessment and the curriculum. The staff uses UBD to plan inter-curricular activities and to align the curriculums to state standards. This common understanding has secured consistency across grades and has facilitated planning. However, the use of differentiated instructional activities by teachers is not yet a consistent practice throughout the grade levels.

Parents confirm that communication between school and home are very good and that the school provides them with guidance, which enables them to assist their own children to grow academically, socially, and emotionally. The school shares its high expectations to everyone via intake interviews, curriculum nights, weekly e-mail newsletters, student progress reports and an online grading system. As a result, parents are truly engaged in the life of the school community.

Students talk animatedly about how well they are doing. They are very knowledgeable about standardized test results, independent reading levels, their current performance, and what they can do to learn more

**Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students' learning goals.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The school's inter-disciplinary approach makes cross-curriculum connection for students. The humanities class combines the English language arts and social studies curriculum making real world connections, which engage students. For example, a "World War II" activity incorporates literacy skills through which students compare and contrast what they read to issues still relevant in today's society. The school provides challenging projects for students to earn extra credit. For example, sixth grade students are designing a roof garden that combines English language arts, math, science, and art skills. Eighth graders are designing their own apartment utilizing learned skills from the core content subject areas. As one student stated, "It is fun to see what we're learning at school and relate it to real life activities."

Teachers make good use of rubrics in core subject areas and encourage student involvement in goal setting. Some teachers are already beginning to take this to the next level by gathering their own data to understand how their students learn best in order to build this aspect into their lesson planning. Even though the teachers plan extensively, differentiated instruction is not yet evident across all grades and in all content areas. As a result, not all students receive targeted instruction directly related to

their strengths and weaknesses. The principal plans to support work in this area through professional development activities.

The principal is competent at securing additional funds to introduce programs and technological resources to improve the educational opportunities for students at the Tompkins Square Middle School. He uses all available information to make strategic decisions, which improve organization, scheduling and staffing and thus enhance student progress and learning. For example, the collaborative team teaching class now has only six students with disabilities per class in order to maximize student-learning experiences via a lower teacher to student ratio.

The school has extensive after-school programs in drama, dance, fashion design, photography, technology, and sports. Students stated that they enjoy these programs, especially when the school puts on performances. Parents speak highly of the school, and talk of “how great the ‘new’ principal is doing”. They state that he takes on all responsibilities, he is open to suggestions, is innovative and humorous. He has gained the respect of the educational community by working hard and doing more than he has to. The school has an impressive 95.5% average attendance rate because of effective protocols. These include close parental contact and a definitive message that regular attendance is necessary to prepare for high school and college. This high attendance confirms the students’ statement that they love coming to school.

**Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.**

**This area of the school’s work is proficient.**

The principal meets with the faculty every morning before the start of the school day for about ten minutes. This frequency of communication has improved the alignment and coordination of effort throughout the school, leading to improved communication. The principal observes teachers formally and informally and is in classrooms on a regular basis to assess and improve teacher practice and student learning. However, some teachers have not received formal observations. Therefore, the level of support to teachers varies based upon the frequency of observations.

Teachers use common preparation periods and their grade meetings to develop their own expertise. They visit one another’s classes and share best practices to improve the overall quality of instruction. Support for new teachers includes three days of professional development in the summer, during which the school trains them in its instructional goals and its culture. Teachers speak very highly of this experience because it helped prepare them for the beginning of the school year.

The inquiry team is focusing on improving students’ mathematical reasoning skills. The team has designed its own assessment to determine improvement. The work of the team underlines the importance of careful analysis of both formative and summative data to identify and address specific skill deficiencies among targeted students. Although the inquiry team shares its work with the faculty, the staff do not generally take the opportunity to attend inquiry team meetings to learn specific change strategies to help inform their classroom instruction.

The school plans professional development strategically to provide activities and resources to improve instruction. In addition, teachers are encouraged to be proactive in improving their content knowledge and skills. Partnerships with Teachers’ College, M839 Tompkins Square Middle School: March 24, 2009

department and technology facilitators, monthly professional development meetings, and high quality support from the math coach all contribute to improvements in the quality of instruction. Systems and procedures allow the school to operate effectively and safely contributing to a positive learning environment. The school is located on the third floor of a building that has two other schools. By locating the sixth grade in one corridor, the tone of the school was improved. The success of this reorganization is evident in closer relationships between staff and students, and closer collaboration between staff working in the same grade.

Youth development activities such as overnight field trips, music, fashion, photography, various sports teams, digital arts, filmmaking, step, drama, field day, karate, a school newspaper, and a yearly carnival supplement, enrich, and add depth to the school's curriculum.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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.**

This year, the school piloted design-your-own assessments in English language arts, math, science, and social studies. Teachers gather, analyze, and interpret data at the school level to develop assessments that evaluate student progress effectively. Utilizing this tool, teachers revise instructional practice throughout the year to meet student-learning goals. This interim goal-setting process is becoming a systemic practice within the school enabling the staff to review individual student, sub-group, and grade level results on a regular basis to determine academic growth. Teachers collaborate to identify what instruction works best. The teachers' readiness to learn from each other means that they modify their practice and adjust their assessment if it is likely to lead to better student progress. The school continually evaluates intervention programs and challenge projects to determine their impact on student learning. Teachers make adjustments if the goals set need to be more challenging or modified. The self-evaluation is a reflection of the school's capacity to support a clear vision, exemplified by the implementation of the design-your-own assessments. The school developed these collaboratively at a retreat and modifications occur based on identified goals. A dean of community relations supports the outreach strategies that the school provides to its constituents. As a result, it keeps parents well informed and expects them to participate and support their children's learning.

The principal embraces the distributive leadership model. He shares his vision for raising achievement with the entire Tompkins Square Middle School community, and he is an excellent role model for faculty, staff, and parents. Staff follow the rigorous procedures for checking, reviewing, and evaluating the school's work. As a result, student achievement and progress are improving steadily. The school's ambition for excellence is tangible and all students are encouraged to learn by working together. This supports the school mission for all students to have moral principles, be self-evaluative, and formulate opinions and ideas that demonstrate a love of knowledge.

The structures implemented this year are already proving to be powerful tools in further refining how to measure progress and in driving forward the future movement in student learning. The educational community of the Tompkins Square Middle School is committed to making it a model school in New York City. The school's performance indicates that it is on the right track to achieve that objective!

# School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

<b>School name: Tompkins Square School</b>	△	▷	✓	+
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.</b>				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?				<b>X</b>
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?			<b>X</b>	
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?				<b>X</b>
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?				<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				<b>X</b>
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?			<b>X</b>	
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?				<b>X</b>
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?				<b>X</b>
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?				<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>				<b>X</b>

## DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYO, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

## Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses

<b>rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students' learning goals.</b>							
<i>To what extent do ...</i>	△	▷	✓	+			
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?			X				
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?			X				
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?				X			
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X				
<b>Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.</b>							
<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	△	▷	✓	+			
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher's instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?			X				
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?			X				
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?				X			
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X				
<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>							
<i>To what extent do...</i>	△	▷	✓	+			
5.1 the school's plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher's instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?				X			
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?			X				
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?			X				
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?				X			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
△	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	▷	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>	✓	<b>Proficient</b>	+	<b>Well Developed</b>