

Quality Review Report

2009-2010

Technology, Arts & Sciences Studios

Middle School 301

**185 First Avenue
New York
NY 10003**

Principal: George Morgan

Dates of review: March 3 - 4, 2010
Lead Reviewer: Monica George-Fields

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Technology, Arts & Sciences Studios is a middle school with 227 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 27% Black, 56% Hispanic, 4% White, 1% American Indian, and 12% Asian students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 32% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 91%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

This small middle school is a gem nestled on the top floor of a school building that it shares with an elementary school. It bustles with engaging student activities and inspired teachers who all share in the common goal of creating and sustaining a remarkable neighborhood school for all students. The school leaders and teachers know every student well and take great care to ensure that their experience in school is a fruitful one. However, existing partnerships with external agencies do not include sponsored extended day activities.

The school uses detailed teacher-created curriculum maps that align to State standards and include the arts. These instructional tools provide teachers and students with consistent standards-based lessons that focus on increasing students' writing skills in all subjects. Thought-provoking lessons give students opportunities to develop higher order thinking skills. School leaders and teachers collect a comprehensive range of data, which creates a clear picture of what the school does well and what the topics for continued professional development are. Teachers regularly discuss data during team meetings that result in fostering high levels of teacher collaboration. School leaders readily identify and encourage teacher leadership, so that teachers have a voice in school decisions and support each other. Teachers are an integral part of the school cabinet and are highly valued by the school leaders. Teachers effectively track and analyze the progress for English language learners, special education students, students who need interventions and lesson extensions. As a result, they are able to respond to students' needs in a timely and effective manner. Teachers regularly work collaboratively to discuss effectiveness of their assessment tools. Based on these discussions, the school implemented the use of school created and other data tools. However, teacher teams do not discuss protocols for instructional best practices and classroom observations do not always lead to the evaluation of teacher effectiveness. Additionally, school leaders' response to classroom observations lead to generic teacher supports and do not always include actionable feedback. This, at times, leads to uneven student experiences in a minute number of classes.

The entire school community consistently and effectively communicates and collaborates with parents via an open-door policy. Parents receive strong support from the parent coordinator. The very active school leadership team has led to several successful collaborations, including a school building council and fundraising efforts.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and faculty collaboratively create coherent, detailed curriculum maps, aligned to State standards that include rigorous activities and interdisciplinary units, which challenge students to do their best.
 - Students consistently use higher order thinking skills by engaging in thought provoking lessons. For example, students silently recorded their reactions and responses to other students' thoughts about the murder of Emmett Till. One student's response illustrated great awareness in saying, "The way he died made me mad at Caucasians all over, but I can't be mad at them all because that will make me a racist too!"
 - Upon successfully analyzing the English language arts assessments, school leaders and teachers decided to infuse writing standards into all curriculum maps. Teachers routinely include writing extensions to content area lessons, which results in student work products and assessments that consistently provide evidence of an increase in proficiency and the amount that students write.
- School leaders and faculty regularly gather and analyze a comprehensive range of summative and formative academic and social data, which they effectively use to identify trends and areas for additional supports.
 - School leaders and faculty successfully gather and compare students' socio-emotional anecdotal reports and academic data to analyze how the school is doing with meeting the needs of the whole child. As a result, the clear and concise picture of the school's strengths and areas of need lead to meaningful and productive weekly cabinet meetings that identify the school's next steps.
 - Teachers gather a plethora of school data such as pre and post-tests, Acuity, unit exams, and student work products. During team meetings, teachers share data and collaboratively identify achievement trends. Teachers successfully use the data to determine the effectiveness of the curriculum and identify topics for professional development.
- The school developed unique assessment tools that enable them to effectively organize and evaluate student data, which leads to timely responses to English language learners and special education students.
 - All teachers use SnapGrades, an electronic grading system, or school-created Excel spreadsheets to gather and analyze student data. Teachers use the system to look for student trends, especially amongst English language learners and special education students, and to adjust their daily lessons. These decisions result in targeted instruction based on the analysis of real-time data.
 - The school's intervention team created a detailed checklist and portfolio system to track the progress of the special education subgroup. Data from all teachers working with special education students, including the

arts and physical education contribute to the portfolios, which results in school-level scheduling and curriculum adjustments so that these students' needs are successfully addressed

- Teacher teams regularly and effectively collaborate to establish data-informed achievement goals for identified subgroups of students so that teachers can collectively monitor student progress towards the goals.
 - Teacher teams establish annual and interim goals for special education students, English language learners, and struggling students using data from ARIS and other sources. Based on data analysis of the interim goal, teachers regularly create differentiated goals, which results in encouraging students to attend early morning or lunchtime tutoring to accomplish their new goals. During the group meeting, students credited these sessions for successfully targeting and achieving specific goals.
 - Teachers have established strong and regular systems to communicate students' areas of need and successes to parents via telephone, email, and postal mailings. As a result, teachers enthusiastically spoke to how these systems successfully encourage high levels of student accountability and parents' ability to track student progress.
- The school community communicates extensively with parents and students, engaging them in school decisions, which promotes high expectations, active parent engagement, and successful student-teacher partnerships.
 - The principal and parent coordinator strategically share an office space so that parents and students hear a consistent but supportive message of the high expectations set for all students. As a result, parents feel supported and welcomed to express their concerns and suggestions. In addition, students establish a clear understanding of the alignment between teacher expectations and the school-wide goal of high achievement for all students.
 - The parents and staff successfully work in tandem to actively address the concerns about building space, curriculum, and fundraising. As a result, their efforts led to the creation of a building council and successful winter flea market.
- School leaders have successfully developed systems whereby teachers routinely collaborate during highly structured teacher team meetings so that they are included in decisions that impact on achievement and data use.
 - The school's creative schedule allows all teachers to have the opportunity to participate in weekly horizontal (grade) or vertical (subject) inquiry meetings. This results in a teacher articulating that, "Teacher collaboration is immense and I know I am a better teacher because of these meetings".
 - During the teacher team meetings, databased conversations lead to identifying teachers with knowledge and strengths that translate into teacher leaders. For example, one teacher with expertise in using Excel and another desiring to become an administrator resulted in establishment of a teacher leader for Excel and the other joining the school leaders' cabinet.

- School leaders and teachers regularly discuss the effectiveness of their assessments and data tools and measure the effectiveness of the school's goals of accelerating student achievement.
 - School leaders and faculty evaluated the effectiveness of the ARIS system and determined to utilize SnapGrades to supplement the summative data found in ARIS. The school then adjusted their subscription to include more features from which teachers, students, and parents could benefit by noting students' next steps.
 - When the school leaders and teachers noted that the data tools used to aggregate student assessments did not reveal the data trends of their Level 4 students as well as it highlighted trends for Level 1 students, it adjusted the forms. This resulted in teachers increasing lesson extensions such as math choice bingo activities where challenging and simpler questions lead strategically grouped students to win the math bingo game.

What the school needs to improve

- Use the regularly scheduled classroom observations to create differentiated support strategies for teachers who experience difficulty delivering consistent, rigorous instruction so opportunities to reflect and grow increase.
 - School leaders' performance management decisions lead to a generic range of supports such as, interclass visitation and mentoring. They do not differentiated the support based on the teacher's next learning steps or make feedback actionable, which limits teachers' opportunities for growth.
- Continue to look for ways to expand relationships with external agencies in order to support the school's efforts to provide students with extensive youth development and personal growth opportunities.
 - The school has developed external partnerships with many agencies, but those agencies do not offer extended-day activities or professional development incorporating socio-emotional support with instruction. Parents and students are concerned about the longevity of the wide range of after-school activities that teachers voluntarily offer and with a minute number of teachers who have not fully incorporated socio-emotional supports with classroom instruction.
- Develop a system for evaluating and addressing teacher effectiveness and leadership development so that all students consistently receive rigorous instruction in every class.
 - Although school leaders routinely use a range of data to evaluate teachers, not all classroom observations lead to evaluations of teacher effectiveness. In addition, regular data focused teacher team meetings do not include reflections about coherent instructional practices. As a result, teachers do not routinely share instructional best practices during teacher team meetings, which lead to a few students in a very small number of classes not consistently receiving rigorous educational experiences.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: Technology, Arts & Sciences Studios	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overall QR Score				X
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?				X
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?				X
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?				X
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?				X
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?				X
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?				X
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X

Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?				X			
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?				X			
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?				X			
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?				X			
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X			
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?			X				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?				X			
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?				X			
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 4				X			
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?				X			
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?				X			
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?				X			
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X			
Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed