

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

**TAG Young Scholars
Elementary/Middle School 012**

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

Principal: Janette Cesar

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Lead Reviewer: Marlene D. Wilks

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

TAG Young Scholars is an elementary/middle school with 506 students from kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 50% Black, 30% Hispanic, 3% White, and 17% Asian students. The student body includes 0.40% English language learners and 1% special education students. Boys account for 44% of the students enrolled and girls account for 56%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 95.2%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The curriculum offers a wide range of experiences and choices including the Arts and technology with resources for standards-based learning resulting in students' preparation for access to college.
 - Students who enter TAG for Young Scholars come ready to participate in an enriched curriculum. The school year begins with a semester long integrated non-fiction unit with a focus on Common Core State Standards (CCSS) elements. The curriculum also offers a very rigorous, diverse project-based science course that is supported by technology, which prepares Grade 7 and 8 students for the Regents. Based on analyzed data, the school procured non-fiction libraries in order to integrate science, social studies and the Arts into the writing units to build vocabulary and develop writing proficiency. Teacher teams used student work from this non-fiction unit to determine subsequent instructional moves; reinforce best practices and target students for individual support.

- The development of project-based learning gives students opportunities to undertake research, solve problems, and be more active learners resulting in a coherent set of beliefs that permeate instruction.
 - School administration and many teachers believe that students learn and produce optimally based on their learning styles. Consequently, most or many teachers require students to provide artifacts as proof of their learning through exit and other theme-based projects. For example, in an integrated non-fiction unit on Egypt, upper grade students used technology to produce feature articles on the mummification process.
 - Teachers observe that most students work best in groups, while fewer are independent learners. In some classrooms, students collaborate on project ideas as the lessons unfold. For example, students create games based on a unit of study and then share them as a way to increase others' knowledge of the topic. Teachers review the content of the individual projects to ensure that rubrics are used appropriately and meet the required standards.

- Leaders make informed decisions across all aspects of the school to support students learning.
 - School leaders analyze data to target relevant professional development opportunities for teachers. New information garnered from trainings and conferences support teacher inter-visitations, teacher collaboration on unit planning and analysis of student work, identifying students as candidates for individualized academic intervention, and the creation of projects and tasks that are at or above grade level, which included staff working with Harvard faculty to introduce TAG scholars to “mock trials.”
 - Addressing the academic needs of individual students is high priority for the school. Teachers are available to meet with students early morning and later

afternoon to provide support in the form of small group instruction or enrichment for mandated and non-mandated students.

- The school is a safe place where students engage in learning and appreciate the support they receive for their personal and academic development.
 - While the current Learning Environment Survey shows that many parents feel that the campus is unsafe, they consider the confines of the school a very safe environment, touting the relaxed classroom atmosphere and teacher-student interaction leading to a respectful culture. In addition, the school has partnered with the YMCA, Hunter College, Randall Island, CA Technology and Harvard University to provide students with many extra mural activities that help to support their social and emotional well-being. Students spoke highly of the social and emotional support that they receive from administration and community partnerships.
- Teachers collaborate frequently to examine student work, plan together and visit classroom to share ideas and best practices leading to improved instructional plans.
 - In addition to regular inter-visitations, horizontal and/or vertical teams meet weekly or bi-monthly to analyze common pieces of student work. Using a specific protocol to facilitate instructional discussion allows them to identify next steps and set instructional priorities for their individual classrooms
 - Improving student proficiency in writing is a school-wide goal. Student proficiency is judged based on their performance on three major writing assignments for the semester which are evaluated using rubrics developed by teacher-teams and used to inform next steps.
- Parents are key partners in their child's education and are kept well-informed of school programs and their child's needs.
 - To improve communication with parents, the school has created a website (www.tagscholars.com), provided automated mass phone calls to parents, provided opportunities to use Facebook and Twitter to engage in teacher-teacher-parent conversation and has sent out a monthly PTA newsletter.
 - Parents are sent to the District 4 Resource Center in order to access information of their children's progress on ARIS. The school also gathers information about student performance and progress and communicates results and next steps to parents three times a year.

What the school needs to improve

- Use observation tools to develop goals and plans with teachers that align with and support school-wide goals to enrich professional growth and improve student achievement.
 - The observation tool in place, a generic checklist, does not describe nor target required outcomes for students and teachers limiting opportunities for capacity building. While Teachers have been given opportunities to attend national and local conferences, the observation tool is not utilized to determine the impact of these professional developments on teacher performance.

- Promote greater consistency in differentiated instruction based on data so that lesson planning reflects purposeful groupings, students are challenged and tasks accommodate different learning styles.
 - While some teachers effectively differentiate instructional methods, greater attention should be paid to the differentiation of content and product across the school. Purposefully planned differentiation to include content and product are not consistent therefore limiting the school's ability to provide for the diverse learning needs of all students.
 - Time is budgeted for teacher-inter-visitation and team collaboration around student work to identify strengths and weaknesses. With the exception of a few classes observed, the tasks and required outcome were the same for all of the students in the class. A lack of frequent observation of teaching practices and regular feedback to teachers reduces the administrators opportunities to set the tone for planning for diversity in all classrooms
- Set school wide measurable interim goals in all subjects for all students and actively monitor their progress to evaluate and modify programs where necessary.
 - School wide goals communicated in the Comprehensive Education Plan are not aligned with the goals described in the Schools Self Evaluation Form. Furthermore, the short lists of school level goals in the CEP do not specifically address the acceleration of student learning. Short-term goals that directly impact student performance are not communicated to the school wide community and regularly monitored for attainment.
 - According to the schools' Progress Report, students' progress in ELA and mathematics is approximately 50%. However, no actionable school wide long-term or interim goal addressed student progress in mathematics thereby limiting the schools ability to measure such progress against a specific outcome.
- Create a structure or system that will enable key stakeholders to analyze the impact of small-group instruction on student achievement and track student progress in all core subjects.
 - The 37 ½ minutes are used to target students for small-group instruction. However, no formalized system is set up to capture how these sessions impact student progress. Consequently, teachers' ability to make informed decisions about students' individual needs is limited.
 - Each classroom teacher has identified five students to observe as they engage in the school wide inquiry process. However, independent of citywide tracking systems, there is no school-level tracking system to regularly capture information about these students' progress or to track the direct impact of specific "change strategies" on student performance. As a result, the school's ability to gauge the impact of the inquiry work is minimized.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: TAG Young Scholars	UD	D	P	WD
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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	
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, 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	

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>	UD	D	P	WD			
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			
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>	UD	D	P	WD			
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			
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>	UD	D	P	WD			
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					
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient X	WD	Well Developed