

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Tappan School

Elementary School – Middle School M046

**2987 Eighth Avenue
New York
NY 10039**

Principal: George Young

Dates of review: October 27 – 28, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Gale Reeves

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Tappan School is an elementary–middle school with 833 students from prekindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 51% Black, 47% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 90.3%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has strong internal and external supports that have a positive impact on students' social, emotional, and academic development. (4.4)
 - The school psychologist and social workers frequently provide well-delivered professional development to staff. As such, teachers are well prepared to utilize strategies that meet the social-emotional needs of challenging students, resulting in the reduction of guidance referrals.
 - Added supports from Harlem and Presbyterian Hospitals integrate well with school-based guidance services throughout the school day to meet the needs of students and their families. The school's outstanding collaborations with Carnegie Hall, The Julliard School of Music, Studio-in-a-School, and the New York City Ballet provide all students with enriched arts experiences. School leaders recognize that the arts are areas where lower performing students excel. Consequently, the arts serve as an entrée to creating increased levels of student excitement and involvement thereby bolstering students' self-esteem.
- Parents are kept well informed, resulting in an open exchange, increased parental support, and a shared commitment to school's goals. (2.4)
 - School leaders, faculty and support staff, use phone calls, emails, biweekly "informative" progress reports, instructional student conferencing and parent conferences to continuously engage families in ongoing reciprocal dialogue about their children's' social and academic progress. Students receive verbal and written feedback, and work products aligned to common core math learning tasks are prominently displayed on bulletin boards with "glow and grow" feedback. Monthly attendance, academic and holiday assemblies and luncheons, celebrate student accomplishments. Families appreciate the teacher facilitated curriculum nights as well as workshops on literacy and math. The English as a second language teacher and assistant principals share resources and provide focused support to the families of English language learners. These structures enable parents to support students' instructional needs at home, contributing to noted achievement gains on summative assessments, thereby narrowing the achievement gap for Hispanic students.
 - Parents volunteer to support school personnel during lunch, morning line up, and at dismissal. This increase in adult to student ratio is conducive to optimal levels of student safety and success. A broad based level of support results in the active involvement of parents on the school leadership team. Parents provided input in the well-designed and remodeled Robin Hood school library as well as the newly refurbished student playground. As such, they feel valued as partners in the process, resulting in a shared commitment to the school community.

- School staff maintain a safe environment and coordinate supports to positively impact on students' personal and academic development. (1.4)
 - A deep sense of calm, trust, and respect permeates the entire school community. During monthly attendance meetings, team members review data, note trends, and identify needed interventions to address chronic lateness and absenteeism including frequent home visits by support staff. These concentrated efforts result in an increase in monthly attendance rates and a reduction in the number of tardy students. Additionally, a review of the school survey, suspension data, and incident reports, by the active safety committee, led to a peer mediation initiative geared specifically to support the social-emotional needs of middle school students. This initiative is swiftly contributing to the leadership development skills of selected students. Basketball, cheerleading, band and choral after-school teams, as well as focused supports from staff, ensure that students are known well by varied members of the school community. Students note that they "feel very safe" and can turn to staff to help them resolve personal issues and concerns that interfere with learning. As such, varying emotional needs that are addressed in a highly differentiated manner enable students to focus more on their learning, resulting in growth of their academic achievement.

- School leaders and staff communicate high expectations to students and families in order to promote improvements in student and adult learning. (3.4)
 - The administrative team, through faculty conferences and weekly cabinet and planning meetings, consistently communicate a high instructional focus. Staff welcome the training provided by their peers as well as network personnel. Teacher teams are granted tremendous autonomy and teacher leaders prepare and share meeting minutes and agendas with the administrative team. The continuous and transparent cycle of support creates high levels of individual and team accountability leading to improved teaching practices and student learning.
 - Multiple opportunities are provided to middle school parents to learn about curriculum and instruction. The guidance counselor facilitates workshops on the high school application process and proactively coordinates tours to rigorous and academically challenging high schools. This results in a very high number of eighth grade students taking the specialized high school exam as well as auditioning for specialized schools with a focus on the arts. As such, parents and students have increased aspirations for college enrollment.

- Through use of a wide range of data, leaders and faculty have an understanding of the performance of individuals, which informs instructional decisions. (2.2)
 - Common assessments created by grade level teams, in addition to selected rubrics, are used to analyze grade level trends, and promote ongoing conversation and reflection. This leads to a revision of specific areas in the math curriculum, which align with Common Core State

indicators. As a result, teachers identify gaps and re-teach particular aspects of the curriculum thus solidifying learning.

- Teacher teams and individual teachers review assorted streams of data including Acuity and the Early Childhood Literacy Assessment (ECLAS) system, interim outcomes, classroom snapshot information, and running records, in order to develop a comprehensive portrait of current needs. Teachers assemble data binders and track the progress of the lowest third students. This results in supplemental support via small group extended day and after-school programs, which help to raise the achievement levels of targeted students as noted on teacher developed assessments, and Fountas and Pinnell reading trend charts.
- Professional collaboration is a high priority and faculty benefit from varied opportunities to share and develop strengths as individuals and as members of a professional learning community. (4.1)
 - Weekly informal walkthroughs and formal observations by school leaders enable teachers to promptly receive verbal and written feedback. As a result, several newly assigned teachers exhibit understanding of grade appropriate strategies that elicit basic student understanding. Additionally, after identifying pedagogic trends, administrators provide demonstration lessons and intervisitations accordingly and plan for future supports, which are facilitated by teacher leaders and assistant principals. This prompts teachers to refine their pedagogy and fosters teacher growth.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine the curriculum emphasizing rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills for a variety of learners with different needs. (1.1)
 - Teachers are designing rigorous tasks aligned to common core standards in math. However, curriculum tasks in literacy are not yet well matched with key standards, higher order skills, and/or essential questions across all grade levels. As a result, students performing at varied ability levels, including students with disabilities, are not consistently and rigorously challenged.
 - Teachers collaboratively plan common academic tasks for groups of students and discuss student work at grade meetings using a tuning protocol that allows for an objective review of student strengths and the identification of needed next steps. However, tasks are not then further refined after reviewing student work products. Consequently, teachers miss opportunities to use this valuable data stream to develop tasks that cognitively engage students at all levels.
- Develop greater consistency in evaluating and adjusting instructional practices in order to build coherence and accelerate student learning. (5.1)
 - School leaders and faculty plan and develop curricula in the summer and at the beginning of the school year. They are at the beginning stages of establishing timeframes and interim points to evaluate, modify and align

curricula and integrate common core literacy tasks in response to student needs. Consequently, real world connections and higher order skills generating testable hypotheses and sustained conversations that give students a chance to support their views with evidence, change their minds, and use questions as a way to learn more, are not yet the norm.

- Deepen instructional practices so that lessons engage all students and offer suitable challenge at their respective readiness levels. (1.2)
 - Faculty design lessons using the workshop methodology with teaching points stated in behavioral terms. Lessons are however not yet consistently refined during grade level team discussions so that all students are suitably engaged and challenged.
 - Although lessons are planned employing questioning techniques and critical thinking strategies, instruction does not employ open-ended questions leading to high levels of student engagement. As such, classroom discussions where students challenge and/or support each other's thinking are not standardized across grades and content areas.
- Streamline the alignment of resources so that all students have the opportunity to undertake research and produce rigorous work products. (1.3)
 - The principal's budgeting, coupled with staff input result in the strategic use of resources aligned to the school's goals. Computers are available in most classrooms. However, all teachers do not yet integrate this valuable resource into their long range plans to enable students to publish end-of-unit reports. Additionally, although teachers meet weekly in grade level planning teams, the integration of the school's librarian and library resources are not fully embedded into the team structure across all grades and content areas. As such, research strategies aligned with project-based learning is not yet consistent across all classrooms precluding students from producing higher leveled work.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Tappan School	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 as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			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, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?			X	
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students progress toward school and class expectations?				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 staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?				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, guidance/advisement 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, with particular attention to the CCLS?		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	WD	Well Developed