

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**Tompkins Square Middle School  
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle school M839**

**600 EAST 6 STREET  
MANHATTAN  
NY 10009**

**Principal: SONHANDO ESTWICK**

**Dates of review: October 28, 2011**

**Lead Reviewer: Daniella Phillips**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Tompkins Square Middle School is a Junior High-Intermediate-Middle school with 389 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 13% Black, 47% Hispanic, 14% White, 24% Asian students and 3% other students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 25% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 95.6%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Staff make highly informed and strategic organizational and instructional decisions that elevate coherence of practices. (1.3)
  - o Since its founding in 2001, the school has refined curricula and organizational structures in support of what truly works for young adolescents. Students follow a seven-period day with 100-minute Humanities classes which allows extended and in-depth study. Careful planning of the schedule offers students enrichment and re-teaching opportunities twice each week and daily Advisory sessions. Additionally, grade-level, core teachers share ten periods weekly for meeting and planning which has produced high level of meaningful collaboration around interdisciplinary units of study.
  - o A new partnership this year links the literacy coach with 7th and 8th grade science teachers as co-teachers in order to deepen nonfiction text understanding and promote literacy strategies. For example, students now complete extensive science lab reports on the shared platform of GoogleDocs, so that teachers and students edit and revise writing with immediate feedback noted on the documents. This approach has raised significantly the quality of lab reports and affirmed students' application of writing process expectations across content areas. Another important impact of this teacher partnership is that leveled reading libraries now exist in all science classes, which enhances students' reading experience and achievement.
- This school embraces in thoughtful and innovative ways the alignment of curricula and overhaul of assessments to meet rigorous standards. (1.1)
  - o The school was selected to join the I-Zone initiative in 2011 to augment their intensive work of assessing students based on mastery of learning targets. School leaders and teachers found that average letter grades were not capturing well students' learning; instead, they have implemented an initiative to define learning outcomes for each unit of study, including work habits, content knowledge, critical thinking, and group work, so that students earn scores of 1 to 4 indicating mastery for each outcome. All teachers are deeply invested in reviewing content curricula and rewriting student outcomes that align with Common Core Learning Standards. Teachers coach each other to use student-friendly language and processes which results in clear goals and expectations for students and families. Supplementing their work on developing outcomes-based assessments, teachers are piloting Jump Rope software to track and communicate easily student progress on key identified standards and skills.
- Teachers use student assessment data effectively so that instructional planning successfully meets students' needs. (2.2)
  - o Teachers across the school review results from tests, interim assessments, and varied student work products and then plan targeted instruction and guided group work from this data. Teachers balance well predictive data with student work samples and classroom assessments in their planning and goal setting with students. Additionally, teachers administer periodic assessments (Performance Series in math and Teachers College reading assessments in literacy) three times each year to determine extended day groupings and in-class modifications for individual students. In all classes, students receive thoughtful rubrics to guide

and assess their work, especially with different genres of writing. As a result, teachers have an accurate picture of students' and subgroups' learning achievement, which has led to stronger teaching practices in writing.

- Relationships among parents, students, teachers and school leaders are positive and trusting which nurtures and supports student and adult learners. (1.4)
  - o Students cite the daily Advisory program as their "second home" where an adult and supportive group of 12 to 15 peers help them succeed in school and life. Teachers implement a three-year Advisory curriculum of social-emotional and organizational skills and competencies and they coach each other in how to nurture trust and productive interactions with student advisees. A recent initiative has students writing weekly "What's Up" journal entries to their advisors and then receiving responses, which solidifies advisor-advisee bonds. As a result, student attendance flourishes at 96.3% year-to-date and student, parent, and teacher sentiment as reflected on the School Survey far surpasses city-wide averages for comparable schools. In turn, the dynamic Advisory program has become an important lever for transitioning students to middle school and preparing them with skills and habits for high school and beyond.
  - o The school ensures that all students participate fully in school day and extracurricular offerings. For example, all advisory groups, grade-level overnight field trips, and sports, homework help, and clubs after school include heterogeneous student groupings which encourage tolerance of differences and interdependence of learning. Students, teachers and parents note the school's "diversity of student body" and community approach to learning as key strengths. Given this deliberate attention to an inclusive environment, it is not surprising that the school's Special Education declassification rate of 2.1% is over double that of other public schools as there is deep commitment to mainstreaming students.
- Teachers at this school set the highest bar for professional collaboration and effective distributed leadership that results in deep investment in continuous improvement. (4.2)
  - o Every teacher references the highly "democratic" and consensus-based process of school decision making as hallmark features of the school culture. Each school day begins with a ten-minute staff meeting for sharing announcements and school happenings. Staff credit this morning huddle with improving whole staff alignment of purpose and coordination of effort throughout the day. With a total staff of 31 teachers, the school utilizes 2 as coaches, 11 as department and grade team facilitators, and numerous committees (such as Student and Family Outreach, Master Schedule, and Assessment) that research outside practices and formulate school improvement proposals. Teachers engage collaboratively at unusually high levels and meeting protocols ensure that student work frames all discussions. As a result, teachers highlight their interconnected committee work as optimizing communication and reflecting the school's culture of distributed leadership.
- Teachers and school leaders have established very effective systems for self-evaluation, review and modification of practice to maximize student achievement. (5.1)
  - o The school has developed flexible structures for monitoring trends in student performance. For instance, an annual retreat focuses staff on large issues, while frequent faculty and committee meetings provide meaningful opportunities for short-term review of practices. This year's initiative on outcomes based

assessments exemplifies the full cycle of reviewing student data, researching best practices, formulating different proposals, and agreeing as a staff on next steps. Similarly, to address a trend of flat 7th grade math scores, the school implemented last year two small groups for math enrichment which has solidified gains by higher performing students. The staff's reflective and consistent approach to school improvement has produced innovative programs that accelerate student learning.

## What the school needs to improve

- Refine feedback to teachers about classroom practices to optimize consistency of instruction. (4.1)
  - o Last year over 25% of teachers indicated in the School Survey that they do not receive regular and helpful feedback about their teaching from school leaders. As a result, the principal and assistant principal have prioritized classroom observations this school year with a new initiative of frequent, five-minute visits to classrooms followed by a brief recap typed into their I-phones of what was observed in the lesson and a question or wondering about the teacher's actions. This promising practice has led to nearly one hundred and thirty classroom visits in these first seven weeks of the school year. Furthermore, two teachers have met with the principal and received verbal feedback. However, no formal or informal written feedback has been shared with any teachers, which then limits the usefulness of classroom visits to reinforce teachers' next steps or affirm their practices.
  - o Teachers feel highly valued and invested in all key school decisions which propels strong teacher retention at the school. A prime example of this distributed leadership is the teacher-led hiring committee process for recruiting, interviewing, and selecting teachers and staff at the school. The principal acknowledges readily his faith in the committee's collective decisions and their proven track record in mentoring and developing new staff. In rare instances when teacher hiring and support have not yielded high quality teacher performance, school leaders have discussed concerns, but not always documented fully interventions, thereby missing a chance to deepen teacher support.
- Deepen what is already very strong teaching across classes with additional supports and challenges for students in more restrictive settings. (1.2)
  - o Students at this school frequently describe their learning with superlatives, such as "the most interesting project I've ever done", and they explain clearly why they're studying what they do. For example, a seventh grader noted that his career project in math class with calculations of tax percentages deducted from income "helped me imagine how to plan my future." Across classes, students work together on meaningful projects, such as developing persuasive essays as a prelude to mock trials, and they discuss literary characters with close attention to text in preparation for a field visit to National Book Awards. Additionally, challenge projects are promoted in every subject area to motivate students even further. This high level of student engagement and purpose across general education and integrated co-teaching classes is less evident in self-contained special education classes, which diminishes the learning experience for students in these two classes. While there is good consistency across all classes of teachers differentiating materials and work for individual students, there is a more teacher-directed approach in the self-contained special education classes and less clarity about why learning tasks are important and relevant to students. As a

result, students work on task in these classes, but appear less engaged and interested in their learning than most other students at the school.

- Set higher goals and expectations for students with disabilities in restrictive settings to accelerate their progress. (3.2)
  - o All teachers set targeted and realistic goals for students, which informs conferencing and small group work in class and extended day instruction before school. These goals derive from thoughtful analysis of student work and interim assessments, and teachers design lessons with differentiated goals to meet students' learning needs. However, the goals and expectations for students with individualized education plans in two self-contained classes lack this same clear roadmap for how to accelerate their learning. This year's departmental approach to teaching these students was intended to further the class goal of differentiating instruction for each student. For example, students use an individualized on-line math program to practice and improve basic math skills. Yet the discrete skill-based approach to these lessons misses opportunities for real world problem solving and relevance. As a result, while students in these two classes have shown fair progress in moving from level 1 to 2 in State exams, they are not fully challenged in their learning.
- Integrate more fully State and other summative assessment data to identify clear next learning steps. (2.1)
  - o The school has very strong systems in place for gathering and analyzing student performance data, such as course grades, periodic assessments, and student work products. In fact, every school-wide initiative is proposed sensibly after thorough review of varied student data. As a result, school leaders and faculty move in one direction towards accomplishing known school-wide goals and priorities. This year, there has been delayed action in delving deeply into summative State test data in part because of other initiatives. For example, the school hasn't yet accounted for a 73% to 49% proficiency level drop by 8th grade students from 2010 to 2011 on the State English Language Arts exam. Not fully understanding this and other summative assessment data trends, such as numbers of students who earn high school Regents credit, limits action planning for school improvement.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Tompkins Square Middle School	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score			X	
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<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
<b>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.</b>				
<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
<b>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.</b>				
<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**

<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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