

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**The Totten School**

**31R034**

**528 Academy Street  
Staten Island  
NY 10307**

**Principal: John Boyle**

**Dates of review: May 8-9, 2012  
Lead Reviewer: Erminia Claudio**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Totten Intermediate is an intermediate school with 1,110 students from sixth through grade eight. The school population comprises .4% Black, 9% Hispanic, 88% White, 2% Asian students and .1% other. The student body includes .9% English language learners and 20% 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 94.8%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal's effective use of budget, resources and talent supports the school's overarching goals of developing and delivering effective instruction to improve student outcomes. (1.3)
  - The principal has sustained a full time literacy coach who supports individual teachers and teacher teams, who meet three times a week, in aligning the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) to the curriculum with emphasis on creating rigorous tasks, as evidenced in English language arts and math curriculum maps and student work products. The school's individualized programming combined with teacher talent affords eighth grade students the opportunity to take Regents classes in Algebra, Living Environment, and United States History and Government, and has yielded a 100% passing rate, resulting in 19 students accepted into specialized high schools. The purchasing of *Data Corp*, a data system for assessment analysis, allows the school to identify trends within and across grades for all content areas so that teaching can be adjusted to meet the needs of all students. The school has written and sustained several grants, along with city council monies to support the implementation of a *Cinemagic* program, flip cameras, closed circuit televisions for every classroom along with laptops and desktops. Recognizing that the existing math program did not delve deep enough into word problems, the school purchased another math program that provides teachers with professional development and has resulted in the implementation of rigorous math tasks that is evident in the gains in student work products, end of the unit exams and Acuity interim assessments.
- The use of a research based common framework for classroom observations along with the analysis of student work drives professional development for teacher growth and leads to increased student outcomes. (4.1)
  - School leaders are in their fourth cycle of short observations using a research based framework to capture strengths, challenges and next steps to provide consistent feedback to teachers with an emphasis on supporting teachers in improved pedagogy. Teachers collaboratively agreed upon three areas for concentration, which ultimately became the school's overarching goals. Using the rubric, school leaders provide consistent feedback that is inclusive of analyzing student work and will often reference research based articles and professional books for reflection. As a result of the school's goal of establishing a culture for learning, 95% of teachers changed the flow of their classrooms to support the workshop model across all content areas, thus affording students the opportunity to work with peers and teachers in small leveled and strategy groups. The school's literacy coach provided professional development on argumentative writing for content area teachers. As a result, 100% of sixth grade social studies teachers taught and implemented an argumentative writing piece resulting in a 44% increase in students performing at grade level or above on the end of unit exam. At the beginning of the school year, teachers received extensive professional development on formative assessment. Consequently, an eighth grade

teacher shared that 100% of her students made gains of one and two levels on a mock New York State math exam because she used formative assessment to drive her instruction. A school created survey indicated that 90% of teachers felt the school's approach to professional development was effective and would like to have two additional days of professional development for the 2012-2013 school year.

- The school maintains a welcoming environment that supports a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that promotes academic and personal growth of students and adults. (1.4)
  - Each grade is assigned an assistant principal, dean, guidance counselor and school aide who remain with the cohort of students for three years. This structure allows for each student to be known well by several staff members, evidenced in the school's Learning Environment Survey, in which 98% of parents feel their child is safe at school and is well known by at least one staff member. To increase the level of student attendance, the school implemented an attendance committee who charts and displays daily attendance in a high visibility area of the school building. An electronic phone messaging system was purchased to communicate absences and important messages to parents. The school celebrates 100% student attendance monthly, and on traditionally low attendance days the school hosts academic and aesthetic school-wide events in an effort to increase attendance. As a result, the school experienced single digit absence on both the New York State English language arts and math exams, and year to date attendance increased from 93.1% in 2010-2011 to 94.8% in May 2012. The school believes that if students start their day on a positive note they will continue throughout the day being successful. For example, before homeroom begins, students assemble in their perspective meeting areas by grade and everyone reads silently for ten minutes. School leaders feel this routine has lead to an increase in the number of students acclimating to the first period and sets the tone for success in a positive atmosphere.
  - Students shared with this reviewer that they have a voice in school decision making, such as designing school logos for T-shirts and other school memorabilia, school trips, enrichment activities and school dances. As a result, students feel that their teachers support them and that the school goes above and beyond to help them achieve social and academic growth.
- School leaders and teachers use data tools to organize, aggregate and analyze student performance trends to inform school-wide and classroom instructional decisions. (2.3)
  - The school purchased Data Corp to aggregate data. All teachers have access to various reports that clearly portray students' individual as well as class strengths and weaknesses. Individual teachers, teacher teams and administrators are able to articulate how aggregated data is used to identify student achievement trends and reflect on implications to determine next steps for individual and cohorts of students, as evidenced by revisions to artifacts, rubrics, assessments and units of study. The school also purchased EdPerformance to assess and track students' Lexile levels. Consequently, most teachers have logged onto

EdPerformance an average of 16.3 times this school year to further inform instructional decisions to improve student performance in reading.

- The school engages families as partners in their children's education and is committed to maintaining a collaborative relationship with them, ensuring that they are informed and involved in their children's school life. (2.4)
  - As per the Learning Environment Survey (LES) the school recognized the need to improve parental communication. In addition to student report cards, unit tests and student goals, the school created a quarterly progress report that is sent home to parents. Parents voiced at the parent meeting that they were thrilled to receive progress reports because it informs them of what their child is doing well and what areas their child needs to improve. The principal has created a student and parent handbook to provide clear expectations for academic and behavioral outcomes. This allows families to have ongoing knowledge of their children's achievement in order to provide needed support for progress.
  - The school created a comprehensive and interactive website that provides multiple opportunities for parents to have an open exchange of information regarding children's progress. The website allows students and parents to know exactly what the school expects socially and academically. It has links to a wealth of academic resources, including ARIS, the Department of Education's home page, an extensive school calendar which highlights school events and aesthetic resources such as videos created by the media classes chronicling school activities. The website has been embraced by the entire school community, evidenced in the large volume of logins. In addition, the parent coordinator facilitates numerous parent workshops on the use of ARIS to support families in understanding their child's performance on various assessments. This has led to 76% of parents utilizing ARIS as a tool to analyze their child's progress.
- The school's effective partnerships and guidance supports provide students with a wide range of opportunities to grow. (4.4)
  - The school's 2010-2011 LES indicates that, 32% of students feel that their peers are sometimes bullied. To address this, the school hired a third full-time guidance counselor. All students receive Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention Services (SAPIS) and guidance lessons centered on bullying, peer pressure and social emotional growth. The newly created student and parent handbook provides clear expectations for academic and behavioral outcomes. Citizenship, academic achievement and attendance are recognized and celebrated during assemblies, on the school website and various bulletin boards. The school offers students internal and external programs and partnerships such as an after school enrichment program that enables them to choose various activities; a Saturday Academy that focuses on New York State test preparation; and a twelve month partnership with the Big Apple Games . As a result, students expressed that they feel prepared for the State exams because of the extra help they received and that they feel the school offers them fun activities.

## What the school needs to improve

- Expand the instructional coherence across subject areas and grades through standards aligned curricula that emphasize rigorous thinking and skills to cognitively engage all learners. (1.1)
  - The school uses vast data sources to align the reading, writing and math curriculum to key State standards and has made great strides in designing and implementing rigorous and engaging literacy and math tasks aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). However, this practice is not fully embedded across all subject areas. Therefore, not all students are cognitively engaged in challenging tasks across grades and content areas, thus hindering activities that push their critical thinking for academic growth.
- Ensure that curricula and academic tasks are suitably differentiated to support instruction that challenge students in their learning and promotes meaningful student work. (1.2)
  - The school believes that students learn best when differentiation is driven by the ongoing use of formative and summative assessments. As a result, students are grouped by ability or by specific skill needed. However, while group work is targeted and questioning in most classrooms leads to some critical thinking and student participation in discussions, students' written work products do not consistently evidence high levels of student thinking. Consequently, not all students are exposed to teaching strategies and academic tasks that consistently challenge their thinking, hindering their ability to produce high level work products.
- Further support teachers in developing on-going checks for understanding during lesson delivery so that adjustments can be made to meet the needs of all learners. (2.2)
  - Across classrooms most teachers use rubrics, formative and summative assessment to identify student performance levels and plan instruction. Most teachers create and use exit slips at the end of the lesson to assess students' understanding. However, in some classrooms the lack of varied checks of understanding during whole group lesson delivery results in missed opportunities to identify students' misunderstandings so that on the spot adjustments to teaching and learning can take place.
- Refine and strengthen professional development to support collegial sharing of best practice and to promote professional growth and reflection. (4.3)
  - While professional development opportunities are differentiated, such as the opportunities provided by school leaders and the school's support network around the CCLS, there is no protocol that supports colleagues in visiting each other's classrooms to reflect on best practice. Consequently, professional opportunities for teachers to study student engagement and pedagogy to support their professional growth towards increased academic outcomes for all students are limited.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

<b>School name: The Totten School 31R034</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
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?				<b>X</b>
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				<b>X</b>
<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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?				<b>X</b>
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?			<b>X</b>	
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?				<b>X</b>
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students progress toward school and class expectations?				<b>X</b>
<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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			<b>X</b>	
3.4 Communicate high expectations to staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?				<b>X</b>

**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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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?				<b>X</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
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?				<b>X</b>

**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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			<b>X</b>	

<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>					
<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>		