

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**The Arturo Toscanini Middle School**

**Middle School X145**

**1000 Teller Avenue**

**Bronx**

**NY 10456**

**Principal: Robert Hannibal**

**Dates of review: January 11 - 12, 2012**

**Lead Reviewer: Dolores Esposito**

## **Part 1: The school context**

### **Information about the school**

J.H.S. 145 Arturo Toscanini is a Junior High-Intermediate school with 485 students from 5 through grade 8. The school population comprises 33% Black, 61% Hispanic, 0% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 29% English language learners and 23% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 91.9%.

### **Overall Evaluation**

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal makes key organizational decisions that align well with the school goals to improve student engagement. (1.3)
  - The principal effectively aligns the school's budget with stated goals. English language arts is an area of school-wide focus with special attention given to student subgroups. For example, the English language learners receive extensive support through partnerships with actors and actresses that work collaboratively with bilingual teachers. They utilize literature to incorporate listening, speaking, reading and writing strategies in their final projects. Thus, student engagement is evident in lessons that enable students to express themselves in different modalities. These practices support the school's effort to promote flexibility and choice in student work projects. In addition, students show progress on the New York State English as a Second Language Assessment Test by three students scoring proficient and 13 scoring advanced.
  - Students benefit from hiring practices, teacher assignments and resources that support English language learners. Teachers are trained with strategies to develop students' writing skills and academic language development. The Rosetta Stone program is used for students during the day and again on Saturdays with parents. During Saturday Academy, students focus on English language arts and mathematics skills to improve their academic language. The school also uses technology as a tool to engage students in their learning. For example, Project Learn and Poetry Slam are used to engage students with digital learning. Students love to participate in these projects and competitions. As a result, students with disabilities also benefit from using technology in literacy, mathematics and science projects. Parents are very proud to see their children's work.
- School leaders and faculty are deeply committed to the social, emotional and academic development of all students, and this has led to a nurturing collaborative school environment. (1.4)
  - Students statements like, "The principal is like my father in school" exemplifies the nurturing climate that has been cultivated in this school. Every teacher is given a student to mentor and follow throughout the year to support his or her social emotional learning goals. Many students share that staff "really cares" and push them to do their best in their academics. For example, students have the opportunity to participate in a Saturday program at the Fieldstone School that prepares them to enter specialized or private high schools. Graduates the school, as well as Lehigh and Princeton University alumni participate in career day and mentor many of the students in the school. Select groups of students visit Yale University and others to promote college readiness. Many students indicate that their teachers promote a love of writing that they did not have in the elementary grades and were proud to share their writing samples during classroom visits. Hence, students are better able to focus on their academic learning goals including college and career readiness, resulting in positive growth of their academic achievement as evidenced

by the informational writing that was displayed in classrooms and teacher data charts that were shared during meetings.

- School leaders gather data sources to identify school-wide strengths and needs to improve student outcomes. (2.1)
  - The school collaboratively gathers and analyzes data from summative state assessments, progress report, Joint Intervention Team report, Comprehensive Educational Plan and other formative school assessments to set clear goals. The principal and his cabinet review the school's data to set goals to improve the reading and numeracy gaps across the grades. They have made adjustments to provide targeted support for the English language learners with academic interventions and enrichment opportunities. As a result, there is a school wide focus to improve student progress and performance as evidenced by. This aligns with the principal's performance goals along with the Comprehensive educational plan to also incorporate the Department of Education's Instructional Expectations. Consequently, there has been progress evident on the school's progress report, interim assessments and recent examination of student work, based on the common core tasks in mathematics.
- Teachers collaborate and benefit from varied opportunities to share practices to improve the quality of student work. (4.2)
  - The principal has structured weekly opportunities for all teachers to meet with their colleagues to review student data and look at student work. Administration meets with key staff members to identify priorities based on classroom observations and data, which helps build the confidence and leadership skills for staff members at the school. Many of the teachers that participated in summer learning for the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) lead follow-up conversations on the CCLS with staff. There has also been a focus on differentiation strategies and, as a result, teachers are beginning to align their tasks with some of the six shifts from the CCLS in English language arts and mathematics. Consequently, lessons are more engaging for students as observed during classroom visits. A review of student work also revealed evidence of writing across the content areas. Students share with confidence how much they enjoy writing in social studies, science and mathematics. "We don't only write in ELA," indicates one of the students. This has raised the level of rigor in the school in response to the Common Core tasks.
- The school cultivates partnerships to effectively engage parents and foster student growth. (4.4)
  - The school makes good use of their resources to engage parents through adult programs such as English as a second language, GED classes and technology instruction through the Saturday Academy. Communication between staff and parents increases through these opportunities and, thus, they help to bridge the gap between home and school. There is a literacy-through-the-arts program for English language learners to support language development. The school also partners with lawyers and judges to study cases and participate in the Thurgood Marshall Mock Trial program that fosters academic engagement, creativity and allows

students to develop critical thinking skills. As a result, parents are very excited to participate in the various school events, leading to high parent attendance, as evidenced on sign in sheets, agendas and parent feedback. Teachers work closely with counselors and school support staff to provide students and families with guidance on postsecondary readiness. The school's attention to parent needs and interests has resulted in positive feedback shared at parent leadership meetings and surveys. Consequently, parents feel respected and welcome, and have a voice in making key decisions in the school, as shared by many parent leaders and school leadership team members. In addition, parent comments in the School Survey and in parent meetings express that they feel encouraged to see the school's progress in the recent interim assessments, student's artwork and performances, all of which fosters student growth.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Ensure that curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and skills across grade levels. (1.1)
  - Even though the school aligns the curriculum to state standards as they incorporate the Common Core tasks, the school is still in the beginning stages of this process. During summer training, staff attended professional learning sessions to learn about the CCLS as part of their curriculum plan. Administration plans with teacher leaders to incorporate these standards across units in English language arts and math to emphasize writing skills. Teachers have developed their curriculum units in English language arts collaboratively but still have not yet refined the units for the rest of the year. As a result, there is a lack of clarity in terms of the content and skills that need to be taught in each unit of study across the grades. Staff members express the need to have more time to plan their lessons so that they can target student needs effectively. Consequently, learning tasks do not yet consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills for all students as evident in student work across classrooms.
- Incorporate differentiated teaching strategies that promote student thinking for all students and subgroups. (1.2)
  - The school's focus for professional development in the summer began with differentiation to support the English language learners and student with disabilities. The Danielson training has also been introduced to the staff in support of the CCLS. Even though some teachers ask good questions that promote critical thinking skills and academic language, evident during a math lesson on expressions, it is not yet a consistent practice for students with disabilities across classrooms. As a result, most students are engaged in whole class lessons that do not provide additional scaffolds to support and extend learning for the varying levels of students. Teachers are able to capture students' interests, but are not able to consistently provide opportunities for students to engage in high leverage tasks. Consequently, there are missed opportunities to deepen student levels of understanding of concepts.

- Use multiple data sources to effectively align assessments to the curriculum to close the achievement gap. (2.2)
  - Teacher teams and individual teachers gather and analyze summative data as well as formative assessments to identify broad gaps in student learning across classrooms. Teachers use common assessments to target general concepts and ideas but do not yet use data streams to identify specific skills and strategies for student subgroups in classrooms or for academic interventions. For example, teachers focus their lessons on comprehension skills but do not yet develop their lessons with enough supports and extensions to effectively meet the needs of subgroups. Charts, books and other instructional tools are not always matched based on student needs, interests and abilities. As a result, students are not cognitively engaged which impedes with their progress and performance levels of achievement, as evident on data from test simulations. In addition, there are missed opportunities to check for student understanding during lessons. Hence, teachers are not able to make adjustments in the curriculum to re-teach concepts and skills that deepen student learning.
  
- Provide teachers with strategic feedback and comprehensive professional development opportunities to improve student outcomes in the school. (4.1)
  - Although administration is very supportive to staff with discipline, professional development, and planning opportunities, currently, there is not a consistent venue for deep learning. Teachers meet weekly but do not have sufficient time to plan rigorous lessons that meet the needs of their students. Most of the planning for these sessions is done from week to week without a clear focus for a differentiated professional development plan. In addition, there are inconsistent opportunities to provide teachers with specific feedback for improvement. As a result, teachers have limited time and professional support to refine curriculum units and plan their lessons. Therefore, student learning is not maximized during instruction, as evidenced in the lack of progress in English language arts data.
  - Even though the staff has been exposed to the Danielson Framework, teacher feedback does not provide consistent targeted feedback that aligns to the schools goals for differentiation. Currently, it lacks the rigor and specificity based on student data and work samples. During classroom visits, most of the students were engaged in whole class lessons with minimal opportunities for differentiation of skills and strategies. Hence, expectations for teacher practice does not consistently align to the school's goals and is not always clear to staff, therefore limiting opportunities to improve student outcomes.
  
- Develop strategic systems to effectively monitor progress towards school goals to accelerate student learning. (5.3)
  - School leaders and staff embrace the CCLS and began to plan and develop curricula in the summer. This practice aligns well with their school goals but is at the beginning stages of developing systems for measuring progress with clear timeframes and interim check points to effectively monitor progress. Currently there is not a cohesive system that

the leadership utilizes to gauge progress of long- and short-term goals. “We need to be more strategic with how we look at data” stated one administrator. As a result, they are not able to effectively determine what progress is made by grade, subject, subgroup or by individual students. Thus, academic programs, professional development opportunities and interventions cannot be adjusted strategically yet, limiting the opportunity to accelerate student learning across grades.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name:	UD	D	P	WD
<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>	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?		<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>	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?			<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>	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?			<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?		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		

<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>