

# Quality Review Report 2013-2014

**Ballet Tech School for Dance**

**PS/MS. 442M**

**890 Broadway 7<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Manhattan  
New York, 10003**

**Principal: Mr. Roy O'Neill**

**Dates of review: December 2-3, 2013**

**Lead Reviewer: Robin Cohen**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Ballet Tech School for Dance is a/an elementary-middle school with 157 students from grade 4 through grade 8. The school population comprises 34% Black, 19% Hispanic, 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 12% White, and 34% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 0% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 96%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Informed, effective and strategic use of resources, partnerships and organizational decisions support instructional initiatives to maximize learning for all students. (1.3)
  - The principal has supported professional learning communities by restructuring teacher team meetings to include both grade level and content area with twice weekly meeting times during and after school, so that all teachers can examine student work products. These meetings are a key component to tracking student progress aligned to the Common Core curricula and instructional shifts and allow teachers to develop timely instructional revisions as needed. For example, the 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher team stated that in the baseline assessment administered during early fall, 3/18 students effectively cited evidence in the task requested. The team then created mini lessons that were woven into the new curriculum prior to the concluding unit assessment to support meaningful learning for all students. Consequently, the number of students who were able to cite evidence in a text increased to 12/18. In order to support building students' content knowledge, teacher assignments are based on strengths in a particular curriculum area. For example, a teacher who has an extensive background and demonstrated impact on student outcomes in social studies is now a social studies teacher. The principal has also structured time so that teachers can engage in inter-visitations in the areas of increasing student led classroom discussions and specific writing techniques. This has resulted in consistency in pedagogical practices, as evidenced in challenging questioning techniques across most classes. To ensure that all students have access to technology and teachers' ability to differentiate instruction, the principal purchased 45 laptops, additional SMARTboards and projectors. In addition, the school has a cooperative venture with the non-profit Ballet Tech Foundation and the Department of Education, which integrates an academic education with pre-professional ballet training. The students visit Lincoln Center twice a year to attend performances of NYC Ballet and American Ballet Theatre exposing them to potential career paths as they watch professional dancers perform. The school's performance troupe prepares students for professional work experiences outside of their school. Presently, 56% of Ballet Tech's graduating 8th graders continues to study dance in various high schools. Another 11% pursue other disciplines within the performing arts. These strategic organizational partnerships are aligned to the school's instructional mission to provide its students with access to a curriculum that trains them in classical dance and sets a path towards "college and career readiness".
- The use of common and specific assessment data and rubrics across the school to inform instructional decisions and meaningful feedback to students enables them to take targeted ownership of their learning. (2.2)

- Across the school administrators and teachers collect and use a range of assessments to complete student profiles and monitor progress. Ballet Tech utilizes NYC Performance Assessments for English Language Arts and they continue to administer Fountas and Pinnell for additional information. Academic Intervention Service (AIS) groups are created based on these assessments. In addition, teacher teams, with support from the school and network coaches, constructed rubrics and checklists aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) to allow students to assess themselves on performance tasks. As observed in classroom visits, students consistently, self-assess using rubrics and partner with classmates to review and revise their work. Teachers use ongoing assessment practices to pinpoint areas of need and strategically adjust instruction that supports student learning. Unit assessments linked to the school-wide literacy and math programs were refined via use of teacher conference notes, anecdotal records, extensive use of rubrics, a school-wide grading policy, student self-assessments and self-reflection. Teachers stated students continue to struggle with organizing their writing, making claims and supporting with relevant evidence. An Exemplar was added to support students' writing needs in mathematics. The principal stated that the "teachers are mindful not to change the rigor of the texts or tasks, but rather take efforts to provide scaffolds to support the students". Exit tickets are used consistently to measure students' understanding of the lesson and allow teachers to adjust the lesson as needed. The data collected by the teacher is shared and analyzed with the school community in various venues such as instructional/collaborative team meetings. The result of this enables teachers to adjust instructional supports and resources and provide ongoing feedback to students. Across classrooms, teachers provide students with time to self-monitor and self-assess, partner with peers to review and revise work leading to increased student ownership. This has resulted in increased rigor in reading, writing and math assessments based on the daily data collection by the teacher, student self-assessment and individual case study analysis during teacher team meetings.
- The school has established very effective systems for observing and monitoring teacher practice with effective feedback on improving pedagogy and student performance. (4.1)
  - The principal provides clear expectations and ongoing support for best teacher practices to promote quality teaching. The school has shifted its use of the Danielson Framework from an informational tool to an evaluative/ professional development tool. The school's main focus is on developing effective questioning and discussion strategies, using data from student assessments and work products to inform instructional practices, procedures and protocols. The school maintains a rigorous schedule of observations and walkthroughs, with immediate feedback, both verbally and in writing. The principal uses low inference data from the observation cycles to support teachers in developing their instructional practice through school-based support. For example, during an informal observation, it was noted that "All questions in whole group discussion were generated by the teacher. All responses were directed back to the

teacher who then asked follow up questions at times where 7 of 20 students responded to questions and 2 were cold called. Students were answering mostly recall questions, some higher level questioning directed to some of the students.” During the feedback/coaching session, the principal discussed “increasing the number of students participating in whole class discussion by teaching protocols for whole class student led discussions. Also planning small group/pair share protocols to increase student participation and strengthening questioning/discussion will increase student engagement.” There is a yearlong calendar of planned classroom visits, meetings with the network instructional support person to review the feedback notes and revise professional development opportunities and/or mentoring as needed. The principal states that after the first round of informal observations it was noted that certain teachers needed additional professional development around student led discussions to raise their performance level from “developing” to “effective” on the Danielson Framework rubric. As a result, targeted professional development was added to the calendar based on this concern. Subsequent classroom observations revealed that all classrooms now provide supplementary supports such as posters with prompts, tent cards on tables and probing questions for students when having student led discussions. Teachers stated that the feedback they receive from administration and peers, along with their participation in teacher teams and professional development opportunities on the use of data, has helped their pedagogy and has resulted in student progress. In addition, it was noted that small group discussions among students is happening more frequently with opportunities for students to engage in initiating higher order thinking questions and inviting comments from classmates. To date, the impact is evident in that 1/3 of all teachers have moved up one level on the Danielson Framework (3b) as a result of changes teachers made in their instructional practices aligned to administrative feedback.

- The school’s curriculum is aligned to the CCLS and integrates the instructional shifts to ensure a range of learning experiences meeting the needs of their students. (1.1)
  - The school’s curricula embed the instructional shifts and promote college and career readiness skills that are taught through Expeditionary Learning, Go Math and Connected Mathematics Program (CMP3) which are aligned to the CCLS. A comprehensive action plan and curriculum maps provide a coherent roadmap incorporating the school-wide focus on nonfiction reading, discussion, incorporating academic vocabulary and writing in all content areas. Teachers report that through a study and analysis of their curriculum materials during the summer, supplemental writing lessons were created to support their students’ needs in meeting the CCLS. The school-wide focus in designing rigorous tasks ensures engagement for all students as they work to locate evidence from texts they are reading to respond to questions, as seen in classroom visits. Strategies such as posters with prompts for students to advance their thinking in discussions, teacher coaching into groups with probing questions and tent cards on tables to push the

conversation to deeper levels of thinking. The curriculum team meetings are dedicated to ensuring CCLS alignment and using student work to plan and revise curricula to meet the needs of all students. To date, this work has led to the creation of supplemental teaching materials to support all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and Students with Disabilities (SWDs). Student work samples are passed on from year to year creating a complete picture of each student's academic level of ability. During the collaborative team meeting, teachers indicated that because of this focus, the quality of student writing has increased as demonstrated through student work products. Also, the impact of this focus is verified by 94% of students identified as the lowest 1/3 in English language arts (ELA), have moved up at least one level in Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Reading Assessment for the first marking period. Furthermore, when comparing NYC ELA Performance Assessment (Fall) scores with subsequent Expeditionary Learning unit tests, all students showed progress in at least one of the following key ELA standards: Writing CCLS W.2, W.9 and Reading R.1.

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

- Further refine and extend the school's approach to culture building and social-emotional support such that student voice is welcomed and valued. (1.4)
  - There is a school-wide focus on strengthening students' academic and personal behaviors such as persistence, self-regulation, self-reflection, collaboration and communication that is prevalent throughout the school and in all classrooms. The administration stresses a team approach, thereby guaranteeing all students are well known by school staff and are able to convey their concerns to the staff. There is a guidance committee to provide support for teachers in helping students with social-emotional issues. In addition, there is an advisory committee that provides supports in areas such as attendance and social-emotional issues, such as bullying. Furthermore, on the first Friday of every month the school comes together to celebrate and applaud students selected by their teacher who demonstrate strong academic and personal behaviors. There is a Spirit Committee made up of one student from each class for the purpose of creating school-wide events. However, to guide school improvement efforts, currently there are no embedded procedures to involve students with decision making processes and committees. During the large student group meeting a student stated, "We don't have a direct voice in school decisions". Consequently, not all students feel they have a pathway to the administration on making decisions for school improvements.
- Enhance teacher questioning during the delivery of instruction in order to enrich student participation, thereby increasing opportunities to further develop critical thinking skills. (1.2)
  - The school's belief that students learn best when lessons are differentiated with multiple entry points and tasks that challenge learners for deeper thinking, is supported by collaborative planning

during team meetings. Challenging tasks are evident in student work products displayed throughout the school. During classroom visits, student directed conversations explaining their own ideas and using discussion to develop and expand their thinking was noted. Students are encouraged to explain the rationale for responses. Across most classrooms, teachers consistently, stated “Tell me how you came to that answer”. To ensure that students assume ownership of their own learning, the school uses the workshop model in all classes providing opportunities for students to engage in guided and independent practice. Students work in flexible small groups, are provided with supports and scaffolds, such as graphic organizers and prompt cards and have multiple opportunities to practice new skills. The school has provided professional development on Webb’s Depth of Knowledge and focused on the Danielson’s competencies outlined in the Citywide Instructional Expectation (CIE). In some classrooms teachers used basic recall questions, which did not give students opportunities to expand on concepts, thus limiting the level of discussion. As a result, some students were not challenged to meet higher levels of thinking and engagement.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: PS/MS 442M	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>				
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards?			<b>X</b>				
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?			<b>X</b>				
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels?				<b>X</b>			
<b>School Culture</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			<b>X</b>				
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations?			<b>X</b>				
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
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>			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?			<b>X</b>				
4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection?				<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>				
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level 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>				
<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>