



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**Harriet Tubman Learning Center**

**Elementary School 154**

**250 West 127 Street  
New York  
NY 10027**

**Principal: Elizabeth Jarrett**

**Dates of review: January 28-29, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Barry King**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Harriet Tubman Learning Center is an elementary school with 475 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 71% Black, 27% Hispanic and 3% from other backgrounds. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 90%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding, with 86% eligibility.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The well-respected principal's clear and shared vision guides the school's development and staff collaborate well in delivering it.
- The calm and well-kept learning environment underpins students' enjoyment of school and the high levels of attention in class.
- Staff have high expectations for their students and are increasingly effective in realizing them.
- The school has a good range of procedures for gathering data on student progress.
- The school is particularly adept at targeting and supporting students most at risk of falling behind.
- Staff appreciate the extensive professional development and the trust placed in them to discharge their roles, and they work very well together.
- The school's leaders keep a close watch on the work of the school through their classroom observations and scrutiny of data.
- A strong range of partnerships supports student learning and enriches the curriculum.
- Staff are receptive to change and have successfully integrated a number of new programs into their work.
- Decisions on scheduling, and on staffing and other resource allocations, are well judged to support student learning.

### What the school needs to improve

- Use data to set and communicate clear, measurable longer-term goals for all students across more areas of their work.
- Include benchmarks in the Comprehensive Education Plan to evaluate the effectiveness of school planning and ensure these are communicated across the school.
- Differentiate work more fully to stretch the higher achievers and support the slower learners.
- Provide more training for staff to consolidate the gathering and use of data, including the integration of electronic data systems.
- Develop stronger links with similar schools to share good practice.

## Part 3: Main Findings

### Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is proficient.**

At the time of its previous Quality Review the school was evaluated as proficient in almost all areas of its work. Its good progress since then is shown by the many features that are now well developed. The foundations of these changes have been the calm and orderly classroom environments that encourage learning, and the collaborative culture of the staff that has been developed by the principal. High levels of trust and a readiness to change have been hallmarks of the school's progress. The school is now more effective at monitoring student achievement through improved procedures for gathering data. Staff are increasingly adept at using it, although they have not had enough training in the new electronic data systems. Otherwise, professional development is extensive. The school's inquiry team is an important part of its approach to gathering and using data, and is clearly focused on 15 students just below the proficiency level. Compared to a year ago, the staff have better opportunities to meet together, there is improved staff retention and school procedures are more consistently applied, with assessment binders now in use in all classes.

The school's 2007 Progress Report has galvanized the school to aim higher in the achievement of its students, and it is working hard to meet the challenging target set for it. All stakeholders testify to the climate of high expectations within the school but leaders do not yet communicate its specific goals effectively to all of them. The school pursues minimum targets for the majority of its students with resolution but it does not set longer-term goals for students that are personalized and relate to their prior achievement and capabilities. The school's instruction is increasingly well aligned to student needs and staff are developing their skills in differentiating work, although rightly understand that this is a priority for further improvement. The school has showcased elements of its work to many visitors and has strong links with a range of external agencies that support its programs. Links with similar schools to share good practice are not extensive. The school has developed a good capacity to continue making improvements.

### How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the student's progress over time.**

#### **This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The school has made good progress since the previous review in gathering and collating data about student progress. The wide range of approaches includes "hard" data from the State and other tests and "soft" data, especially in the younger classes, through observing

the growth and development of students in their day-to-day lives. The school has a number of ways in which it assesses reading, such as the benchmarking of student reading skills using Carmel Hill instruments. The school is particularly alert to the progress of students most at risk of falling behind and is quick to intervene to support them based on what the data shows. It has successfully embraced new programs with built-in assessments to help in this work, such as Reading Rescue in grade 1. This has helped to reduce the proportion of students testing at level 1. The school is making increasingly effective use of the Acuity testing facility, and it is using the results to help it shape its programs of instruction and support. Training for the approaches to gathering and using data has been a priority but has not been extensive and staff rightly feel they need more support.

Data is collated centrally by the principal and her cabinet and each teacher now has an assessment binder to hold data on his or her class. The administration analyzes the data more effectively than a year ago, and has a better appreciation of the trends in results, and the performance of gender and ethnic groups. There is still some way to go in analyzing this data and using it to reshape instruction to tackle weaker performance of certain groups, such as that of Black boys. It has some appreciation of how it compares against similar schools but this is not well developed.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student’s next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student’s learning.**

**This area of the school’s work is proficient.**

The school has high ambitions for its students to do as well as they can, which is summarized in the school’s Comprehensive Education Plan as the intention that all students should reach proficiency in their studies. The Plan does not specify by how much test results should improve each year and so does not provide benchmarks by which the school’s progress in raising achievement can be evaluated. The Progress Report on the school’s performance has had a major impact in the way the school approaches its whole-school goal setting. It has embraced the goal of improving the proportion of students who achieve Level 3 or above in their tests by 15%. Leaders are aware of the need to hold teachers to account for bringing about this improvement, although this important goal is not readily recalled by students, parents or staff. The school has now identified students close to the Level 3 boundary to receive added support to improve their achievement and deliver this demanding goal.

The goals set for most students are, however, in the form of minimum targets to reach a minimum grade level rather than long-term targets for each student based upon the student’s capability and starting points. It uses the mantra “one year plus” to indicate the minimum that students should achieve but does not, for example, set specific targets to stretch the more capable students who can go beyond this basic objective. Rubrics, outlining the skills necessary for a student to move from one level to another, are not consistently or prominently displayed in classrooms and not readily recalled by students. On the other hand, in certain areas of the school’s work, student learning goals are clear, as in the objectives for special education students and the goals in reading programs, which are a particular strength of the school.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.**

**This area of the school’s work is proficient.**

The school organizes instruction through clear pacing calendars that are satisfactorily supported by curriculum maps. The standards for student performance are not currently integrated into these documents. The curriculum is enriched beyond the mandated curriculum by, for example, arts programs supported by external partners such as the Apollo Theater and Guggenheim Museum. The school has also successfully harnessed external agencies to support its successful drive to improve reading, such as the Carmel Hill Fund’s sponsorship of the Accelerated Reader program.

Very good relationships and high levels of trust pervade the school. As one representative teacher said, “You can use your strengths because you are trusted.” This helps create, within the well-kept building, a calm learning environment where students behave well and much enjoy their time at school. They try hard and are very attentive in class. In one grade 2 lesson there was a buzz of interest around the room as, in groups, they studied the content of soil samples. Students continue to concentrate and comply with assignments even when the work is less interesting or too difficult for them. This was demonstrated in a lesson where the level of difficulty of a text made it hard for many students to understand the words but they carried on trying.

The school is well aware of the importance of differentiating instruction to meet the needs of individual students. In general education classes, staff are developing a range of instructional strategies but recognize that differentiation is still “work in progress”. Differentiation is partly achieved by providing separate classes for special education students and, in grades 1 and 2, for gifted and talented students. Certain students are targeted for push-in and pull-out support. Reading books are “leveled” to meet the needs of individual readers. There is some way to go to set work that is consistently aligned to the range of learning need in each class.

The school is well scheduled and resources are tailored to the needs of the students. The principal is aware of the importance of information technology and a start has been made in acquiring more resources. The school has a satisfactory range of approaches to encourage attendance, including rewards for good attendance and follow-up procedures when students are absent.

**Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

**This area of the school’s work is well developed.**

The work of the principal is appreciated throughout the school community. She has built a collaborative culture within the school and models this by her own consensual style of leadership. The result is that the staff are well engaged with the development of the school and work closely with each other. The opportunities for professional development are extensive and well matched to the needs of individual staff and school priorities. They are valued by staff. Through intervisitations and frequent contact, for example in common planning time, they learn much from each other. The staff are receptive to new ideas, and have successfully introduced new programs, as in reading. They rightly regard data

handling as a training priority. The school's leaders keep a close overview of the work of the school through their classroom observations, informal walkthroughs and scrutiny of data. This information is acted upon to support staff in their work. The school's capacity to meet the needs of its students is much enhanced by the extensive and wide-ranging partnerships it has formed with outside agencies. Representatives from many outside organizations visit the school to observe its practice, but it has only a limited range of close contacts with other schools through which it could learn to improve its own work.

The school cares for its students very well. Students report that they feel safe and well looked after, and know they can readily turn to someone to help them if they are troubled. Older students who are about to move to another school believe that they are being guided well in the transition that awaits them. The school runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis and students have clear routines that they follow.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The principal and her senior colleagues collect data in a range of ways to enable them to monitor and evaluate the work of the school. This includes the data generated by periodic assessments, which have much improved since the introduction of Acuity, and day-to-day observations of the work of the school. There is a clear focus on the progress of students just below the Level 3 borderline to enable the school to reach its challenging target for the percentage of students achieving level 3 or 4. The data is used well to adjust the school's provision. For example, the principal moves staff to teach in a different grade if she feels they would be more effective there, and strategic decisions have been made to introduce new instructional programs to promote faster learning. The progress of individual students is tracked well through ongoing assessments, sometimes as part of intervention programs that generate assessment data, such as Kaplan Spell Read.

The school does not yet modify its longer-term goals to reflect different rates of progress. For example, all class teachers in grades 3 through 5 are expected to improve the proportion of students reaching Levels 3 or 4 by a given percentage, and it is hoped that some will exceed this. Teachers are not given differential targets based on the rates of progress of their classes. As a result, learners remain with their floor target of Level 3, without being given higher goals if their progress warrants this. The principal's strong vision for the school is integral to its successes and ongoing development. In her words, she has created "a place where children enjoy learning". She is in the process of transforming the school into one in which students are well suited to their future challenges, not least by improvements in their achievement.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Harriet Tubman Learning Center</b>	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>			X		

### Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?			X		
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?			X		
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?			X		
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?			X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			X		

### Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?			X		
2.2 focus on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area?			X		
2.3 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?			X		
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?				X	
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?			X		
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?			X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			X		

### Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?			X		
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?			X		
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?			X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X		

<b>Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?				X	
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>					X

<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>					
<b>To what extent do . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?				X	
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?				X	
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?				X	
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>					X

◇	<b>Outstanding</b>
+	<b>Well Developed</b>
✓	<b>Proficient</b>
➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>