



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

**Quality Review Report
Office of Accountability
2008-2009**

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

Townsend Harris High School

High School 525

149-11 Melbourne Avenue

Queens

NY 11367

Principal: Kenneth Bonamo

Dates of review: March 5 - 6, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Corinne Brown

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Townsend Harris is a high school with 1082 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 6% Black, 12% Hispanic, 29% White, 51% Asian and 3% other students. The student body includes 0% English language learners and 1% special education students. Boys account for 30% of the students enrolled and girls account for 70%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 97.2%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Townsend Harris is a cohesive community of finely tuned inquiring minds, dedicated to making a positive difference to society. The humanitarian Ephebic oath that all freshmen avow aptly translates in the students' planner as, "The Harrisite student shares his or her talents and skills to help others within the school and larger community." These high achieving students' intrinsic motivation joins with faculty's passion as subject specialists to create a harmonious, committed and vibrant collaboration of learning partners. Students flourish within a rigorous and extensive curricula menu. The administration and faculty skillfully tailor courses to match students' interests, while meeting exacting State and college standard requirements. The camaraderie among this family of lifelong learners is palpable. Students are articulate, critical thinkers with enhanced levels of confidence. They match this with modesty, pride and a sense of social responsibility. Sharp analysis and sharing of data with fluid communication characterizes the school's work. This also underpins the learning partnership of faculty, students and parents. The school is seeking to secure active participation by all parent groups within the community.

Parents and students value the quality, depth and breadth of education at the school where teachers know students well as individuals. High expectations align with high aspirations, and all constituents are goal-oriented and focused. At all levels, administration, teachers, students and many parents collaborate to set realistic, aligned goals. Leaders and teachers' reflective lens means that they seek to continually improve. The quotation above the library/media center, "Ad Astra Per Aspera," embodies this spirit, shared by students. However, some goals and plans lack sufficient precision to enable robust monitoring. Teachers benefit from relevant formal and informal professional development that supports distributed leadership. They inspire students and seek creative ways to connect learning to real-life situations. Many lessons are teacher directed, offering few opportunities for all students to actively participate, or involve questioning that does not embrace all students. Feedback on students' work does not consistently give detailed next steps to encourage student ownership in advancing learning to an even higher level. Through the concerted efforts of all constituents and partners, students achieve impressive academic results and are prepared for college and future careers. The school receives many recognitions of its success, nationally and regionally. As one student commented, "Opportunity is around the corner here in every direction. If you don't seek it out, it'll come and find you." The school community is not complacent. Led capably by the new principal, it continues carrying the torch of its predecessors while firmly embracing the possibilities of the twenty-first century.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Using a sophisticated database, leaders and staff analyze data on student performance and progress so that they have a comprehensive ongoing picture of progress at all levels which they share with students and parents.
- The school's high expectations for achievement, attendance, behavior and personal development are matched by students' intrinsic motivation and faculty's passion for learning.
- Teachers and leaders know students well, so use data to set goals at all levels that are aligned and rooted in accelerating student learning.
- Students thrive within the rich, stimulating and extensive curriculum which develops inquiring minds and stresses personal and social responsibility.
- In this cohesive school where all voices are heard, strong respect, trust and equal value underpin all interpersonal relationships, building a collaborative community of lifelong learners.
- Faculty grows professionally through diverse formal and informal professional development opportunities using a common reflective lens, united in commitment to continual improvement.
- The school community evaluates itself honestly through regular review, building on its strengths with dedication to enhance its significant achievements in facilitating students' academic, personal and social growth.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that all goals and development plans are sufficiently precise, with detailed interim checks, to monitor progress toward their achievement robustly.
- Explore further opportunities to incorporate interdisciplinary connections, allied to consistent opportunities for active participation, effective questioning and detailed feedback in all subjects, to maximize student ownership of their learning.
- Work to secure active involvement in the learning partnership by all groups in the parent population to ensure comprehensive community representation in decision-making and enhance student achievement.

Part 3: Main Findings

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

Committed to the meaningful use of all sources of relevant formative and summative data to improve student outcomes, the school skillfully maximizes the utilization of its database at frequent intervals. In this way, leaders, teachers and guidance counselors disaggregate information on the *Daedalus* database, so they clearly understand the ongoing picture for individuals, groups and cohorts in addition to a whole school overview of all subjects. The school continually customizes this sophisticated tool to identify patterns and trends and consequently initiate interventions. Formal checkpoints occur each marking period, but informal access and evaluation is ongoing, with a longitudinal view over the last five years. In this way, leaders changed the grade 9 and 10 history course to increase rigor for students. As they all achieve high grades, grade 9 students now take the PSAT examination to prepare them for college. At least half of all students gain top grades in advanced placement course examinations. Rigorous attention to subgroup analysis means that no student "slips through the net," as timely interventions are successful. The school's use of data to examine all aspects of student and school performance and so improve student outcomes is exemplary.

Parents and students access relevant areas of the database. Six report cards a year, with additional progress reports when indicated, mean that the community has regular formal contact. As there are approximately 74 languages represented in the school community, the school provides suitable translation services. Communication flows freely with students and a large proportion of parents to share information, results and to establish next steps. Email is one effective communication tool used by parents, students and all staff. The school sent over 650,000 informative emails in the last two years, reflecting parental preference. Robust attendance and lateness procedures result in the second highest attendance in the City, currently at 98.1%.

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 well developed.

The school's overarching longer-term goal for all students is to equip them for college level education. Last year 100% of the graduating class enrolled in post-secondary education. Across the school, all goals such as the principal's performance review, Comprehensive Educational Plan and subject goals align with each other and students' identified needs. Marking periods punctuate the year as formal checkpoints for setting and monitoring long and short-term goals across all subjects. Within this, teachers know students well, so collaborate with students and set individualized incremental targets. In

a similar way, the Comprehensive Educational Plan results from active involvement by all constituent groups, with regular evaluation to monitor progress. The goals are meaningful, rooted in data and continually revisited at meetings of different groups within the school. The school leadership team includes representation from alumni and partners, truly driving decision-making that results from collaboration, with students and parents integral to the process.

Parents welcome the new principal's introduction of a regular principal- parent breakfast, which enhances transparency. This complements strong communication channels such as the school website, reports, weekly newsletters, emails and school newspaper, *The Classic*. These in turn reinforce the high-level expectations for achievement, attendance and behavior outlined in students' planners and set by the staff, who serve as expert role models for students. Students demand high standards for themselves, are intrinsically motivated yet also galvanized by the teachers' passion for their subjects. In this way, the learning partnership of parents, students and staff means that 100% of students earned at least 10 credits each of their first three years in school, as indicated in the City's Progress Report. However, as the parental community demographic changes, one group of parents participate in school life significantly less than all others, despite outreach by the parent coordinator. As a result, the school is exploring creative ways to secure full representation by all parents.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students' learning goals.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

This high-level curriculum is commendable in breadth, range and quality. Rigorous honors level courses, curricula and assessments align with City, State or advanced placement requirements. Leaders and teachers do not annualize the schedule, so creatively devise new electives in response to students' interests. Accordingly, in this humanities-based school, science, math and all subjects are equally exacting. All students study a classical language (Latin or Greek), as well as a modern language (Spanish, French, or Japanese), but elective choices currently range from biomedical ethics or Japanese through poetry or body sculpting to robotics or photojournalism, including the "College Now" program. The wide-ranging extra- and co-curricular opportunities include clubs such as Amnesty International human rights club and 'Free the Children'. One parent spoke for many, saying, "The depth of the curriculum and extra programs is incomparable." In this way, students develop inquiring minds and social and personal responsibility, which they articulate clearly. This is a non-hierarchical community of learners, where students flourish as well-rounded contributors to society. Although the school continues to focus on differentiated instruction within the classroom, programming, regular formal and informal assessments and the subject collaterals or projects, strategically embed differentiation. However, not all lessons consistently give students opportunities for active involvement to maximize ownership of their learning. Teachers' questioning is not always inclusive of all students and some teachers' written feedback lacks sufficient detail to accelerate students' learning. Teachers usefully explore interdisciplinary links, but this is variable practice with missed opportunities to consolidate students' understanding. However, teachers successfully seek innovative ways to secure students' engagement.

This cohesive community breathes respect, pride and trust. The Ephebic oath and Harrisite code, evidenced in the planner, reflect the admirable shared sense of

Q525 Townsend Harris High School: March 5, 2009

commitment to others and to lifelong learning. As a result, students make significant progress personally and academically. Ninety five percent of the class of 2008 took at least one advanced placement course earning scores of three or higher.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

Faculty and the administration share a valuable common lens in purposeful reflection on instruction and professional growth. In this way, lesson observations, walkthroughs and discussions center around *The Essential Elements of Instruction*. However, although teachers collaborate with leaders to devise useful individual professional plans, not all plans detail monitoring indicators with sufficient precision to evaluate progress robustly. Professional development correctly focuses on individual and school needs, so teachers of students with cochlear implants, for example, participate in beneficial training. Grade level meetings, in addition to subject meetings, provide valuable opportunities when teachers assess students' work, or plan and ensure consistency through common grading policies and rubrics. Teachers develop professional skills and share expertise selflessly, with new teachers swiftly embraced by faculty. The expanded inquiry teams reflect all subjects and systematically examine data to target specific skills. The results of last year's constructive work rightly inform classroom practice. The administration encourages teachers' focused inter-visitations and strongly supports devolved leadership. One teacher commented, "The principal treats us like professionals. We feel respected by him. We feel valued by him."

The school is mindful of students' holistic needs, so works with parents to minimize stress for these high-achieving students who place great demands on themselves. The administration carefully monitors potentially conflicting demands on students and makes suitable adjustments and recommendations. As one student reflected, "Time management is important here." The comprehensive guidance plan coordinates effective, timely support for students and families and is the hub of all information exchange. The students profit from advantageous partnerships, such as that with Queens College, with which the school shares the campus and many facilities. The seniors' bridge program provides a fitting culmination to students' high school experience and ensures thorough preparation for college. Other partnerships, such as with New York Pops, The Theatre Development Fund and Con Edison enrich the curriculum and so students' experience. As a result, students grow academically, develop a fine sense of personal and social responsibility and are equipped for meeting future demands.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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 well developed.

The school has systems in place that result in frequent formal and informal review and adjustment to the curriculum, programs and instruction, always with students' needs at heart. Leaders, staff, parents and students contribute equally in holding a critical lens to all aspects of the school in order to refine practice and so polish an already efficient and effective school. The student government and consultative council exemplify two of the

formal teams that ensure that the administration listens to constituents' voices. As a result, the school's Quality Review self-evaluation perceptively and accurately identifies areas of success and areas for continued work. The Comprehensive Educational Plan continues to be an effective vehicle for improvement within Townsend Harris. Through an in-depth analysis of the Learning Environment Survey, leaders are exploring the idea of introducing an advisory program. Although the school is goal-centered and rigorously uses data to inform all aspects of its work, not all goals and plans incorporate precise monitoring procedures to enable secure monitoring of progress toward the goals. For example, teachers' individual growth plans do not currently enable accurate evaluation of the impact of professional development on teacher growth and student outcomes.

However, under the leadership of the new principal, the community works with shared vision and focused action to build upon the sterling achievements of the past and take the school to even greater heights. All constituents roundly endorse his accessibility, transparency and consultative style. As a result of collaborative and concerted effort at all levels, students at Townsend Harris achieve impressive academic results in all subjects, but also develop significantly in social, emotional and personal skills within this empowering environment that offers true academic rigor and challenge.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Townsend Harris High School	△	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score				X
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?				X
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?				X
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?				X
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				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 student’s learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?				X
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?				X
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?			X	
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYO, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

<i>To what extent do ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?				X
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?			X	
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?				X
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.

<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?				X
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?				X
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?				X
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4				X

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

<i>To what extent do...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?				X
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?				X
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?			X	
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X

Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed