

# Quality Review Report 2009-2010

**Harlem Renaissance High School**

**High School 285  
22 East 128 Street  
New York  
NY 10035**

**Principal: Mary Rice Boothe**

**Dates of review: May 10 - 11, 2010**

**Lead Reviewer: Gale Reeves**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Harlem Renaissance High school is a transfer high school with 225 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 63% Black, 35% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes no English language learners and 4% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 64.1%.

### Overall Evaluation

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

As part of the Diploma Plus network of schools, parents, and students consider themselves fortunate to be a part of such a caring, supportive environment, which meets students' social/emotional and academic needs in a cohesive manner with a focus on accelerating learning. Students feel that adults in the school respect their input and the well-integrated and comprehensive student support services enable students to grow socially and academically with the goal of graduating from high school. However, systems are not yet evident to ensure that parents are as well integrated into the school's culture leading to their full involvement as partners in their children's education. The principal is highly visible throughout the school day and provides sound feedback to the staff leading to refined and differentiated professional development to meet the needs of all staff members. Collaborative teacher teams encompassing all grades and content levels have taken ownership for the academic achievement of groups of students. They thoughtfully share practices and accountability for their own learning and the advancement of their pedagogic skills. However, while teacher teams review multiple sources of data to note strengths and next steps, they have not yet taken the important step of consistently making needed instructional adaptations in order to maximize student learning. As such, project-based learning products demonstrating cross-curricular relationships are not evident in all classrooms and not all students are suitably challenged.

The principal's strong belief in distributed leadership results in strategic use of fiscal resources, enabling teachers across content areas to share strategies, plan, and co-teach across multiple grades. As such, they continually learn from each other and collectively support their own pedagogic growth. However, teaching strategies while differentiated do not provide a breadth of study to fully challenge all students and to accelerate their learning according to their capabilities.

Teachers and school leaders know their students well and students are aware of the long-term goals established for them. Student work is displayed throughout the school, most with numeric feedback. As such, not all students receive detailed feedback with clear next steps for improvement so that they can also set their own achievable goals and take further responsibility for their learning.

The school community has a voice in shaping the goals noted in the Comprehensive Educational Plan, which drives the instructional focus of the school. The principal's vision and the school goals are clearly focused and aligned on accelerating student learning and increasing outcomes. However, goal setting is broad and clear measurable interim benchmarks are not yet consistent across all areas so that school leaders can note progress and strategically make needed adaptations at more frequent intervals.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal has created a learning community that is well focused on student outcomes with a vision to continue to accelerated learning.
  - The principal's performance goals and objectives, as well as the Comprehensive Educational Plan, align with clear, school-level action plans, which are developed to leverage growth in student outcomes. The cabinet's consistent review of data outcomes from summative and formative assessments drives the development and utilization of focused content-level goals and action plans for individuals and groups of students, and is used well to inform planning at all levels. Additionally, school leaders conduct their own needs assessment via a school-developed teacher survey and monthly conversations with parents in order to understand the desires of each constituent group and proactively respond. The established protocols are highly supportive of creating a culture of responsiveness, and allowing for regular sharing of goals and action plans, leading to significant levels of support from the school community.
- The school provides a safe, caring and supportive environment where students appreciate the support they receive for their personal and academic development and their ability to influence decisions.
  - Students are appreciative that they can turn to their advisors and guidance staff to help resolve personal issues and concerns that interfere with their learning. Attendance data is reviewed daily and the needs of students in crisis are immediately addressed at weekly guidance meetings. Parents and students freely admit that the school is a "safe haven" where students' social, emotional, and academic needs, are readily addressed. As a result, safety incidents are minimal, thus enabling students to focus on their academic growth.
  - The student led 'Professional Learning Committee' is facilitated by a core group of students who influence school-wide decisions. As a result, students have greater opportunities to visit colleges, a basketball team was formed, and student assessments are more varied. This leads to growth in students' leadership skills as noted in their interactions with school staff.
- The school has established effective systems for evaluating and monitoring teaching practice with a clear focus on improving instructional practices.
  - A weekly support group for new teachers, as well as the assignment of mentors and coaches, help them hone their pedagogical skills. The administrative team is highly visible throughout the school day. Focused daily walkthroughs, the review of current assessment data and formal observations serve as the basis for planning strategic professional development opportunities. Teachers receive verbal and written instructional feedback pertaining to their strengths, next steps, and well-developed assistance plans help guide their improvement. School leaders effectively identify pedagogic trends and strategically provide differentiated supports to meet the identified needs of each individual teacher. As a result, teachers' knowledge base is

swiftly developing and positively impacting students' academic growth as reflected on end-of-semester assessment data results.

- The principal aligns resources well and makes effective organizational decisions across all aspects of the school to support improvements in learning.
  - The principal's strategic use of the budget allows English language arts and history teachers to plan and co-teach across specific grades. This collaborative model, coupled with the school's good use of common planning time, enable teachers to know the content well across grade levels, share strategies, and swiftly develop their pedagogic skills while holding themselves accountable for student progress. Additionally, the small teacher-to-student ratio in many classes ensures that teachers address students' individual needs, contributing to improved student outcomes.
- Teachers across the school welcome opportunities to participate in collaborative inquiry and use this to strengthen instruction and raise learning outcomes.
  - Over 90% of all teachers are engaged in structured collaborations using an inquiry approach. Teachers meet in content as well cross-curricular teams, where teacher leaders take ownership and facilitate meetings on a rotational basis supporting the development of distributive leadership opportunities. Teachers, as key decision makers, have implemented the use of the Japanese lesson study to deepen their teaching practices and the practice of student conferences to accelerate student learning. These structured professional collaborations around best practices, evident at weekly team meetings, not only result in shared leadership but adds to the school-wide accountability to accelerate student growth as evident in the recent 76% passing rate in English language arts and 52% math Regents passing rate, representing gains in both areas.
- Effective student support services and collaborations provide students with a wide range of opportunities to grow academically and socially.
  - Focused collaborations with College Now, Hunter College Liberty Program, and Mission Society, integrate well with other school-based supports throughout the school day to meet students' academic and personal development. School guidance counselors and New York University Social Work interns support the professional development needs of teachers so that they are better prepared to serve students with varied challenges. Partners provide a full range of comprehensive supports including mentoring, college preparedness, future college planning, and personal moral development. Consequently, these resources and services directly positively affect students' academic development.

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

- Promote greater consistency in differentiated instruction based on data so that students are challenged, tasks accommodate different learning styles, and questioning extends thinking to maximize student learning.
  - While teaching strategies are differentiated, sufficient extensions and project-based tasks to challenge higher order achieving students is not the norm

across all classrooms, therefore precluding students from applying learning to new situations to further accelerate their own progress,.

- Teachers create skill-based groupings from formative and summative data results and generate questions that lead to a general level of engagement. Some teachers do not yet generate sustained conversations that give students a chance to support their views with evidence, change their mind, and use questions as a way to learn more and probe for deeper understanding and application of learning.
- Promote consistent rubric-based feedback to students that includes detailed reasons for their success and clear next steps for improvement so that students can set and achieve their goals independently.
  - Teacher feedback on student work products is restricted to percentile level and limited teacher comments. While rubrics are displayed, most feedback is not linked to rubric criteria with detailed comments. Thus, some students are unaware of the necessary steps needed to reach targeted goals and clear expectations for students achievement is not consistently in place for all students.
  - Although school leaders and staff provide feedback to families via progress reports, only a small number of parents have been trained on the use of ARIS Parent Link. Additionally, the Power Schools online system is not yet accessible to students and parents. As a result, the utilization of some tools and processes to deepen families' knowledge and understanding of student performance is not yet an embedded school-wide practice.
- Extend the development of a cohesive system to ensure that all teachers know their individual students' needs, strengths, and achievement across the curriculum on an ongoing basis to support targeted instruction.
  - Individual and teams of teachers review students work products, end-of-unit and semester assessments, as well as Regents' data to note the strengths and next steps for groups of students. However, staff do not consistently identify specific trends and track the progress of all students in order to make instructional adaptations and appropriately regroup students to meet their differentiated learning needs and maximize their learning modalities.
- Refine action planning by developing interim goals and benchmarks for all plans to enable the principal and faculty to modify goals and objectives in a timely manner in order to optimize the impact of actions.
  - The school community establishes annual goals around cohort graduation expectations, Regents expectations, and learning and community building. Additionally, school leaders identify areas of improvements and make needed adjustments. However, goal setting is broad and measurable interim benchmarks are not consistently established across all areas in order to note progress and early mastery of specific goals to strengthen long-range impact.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: Harlem Renaissance High School	△	▷	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
<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>	△	▷	✓	+
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			X	
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?			X	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?				X
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X	
<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>	△	▷	✓	+
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			X	
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?			X	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

**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.**

<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
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?				X
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?			X	
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 students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?			X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			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>	Δ	➤	✓	+
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, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>				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>	Δ	➤	✓	+
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?			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>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X	

<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>	✓	<b>Proficient</b>	+	<b>Well Developed</b>