

# Quality Review Report 2009-2010

**Henry Street School for International Studies**

**High School 292  
220 Henry Street  
New York  
NY 10002**

**Principal: Erin McMahon**

**Dates of review: January 11 - 12, 2010  
Lead Reviewer: Jacqueline Grossman**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Henry Street School for International Studies is a secondary school with 461 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 29% Black, 56% Hispanic, 3% White, and 10% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 31% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 82%.

### Overall Evaluation

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

The Henry Street School for International Studies is undergoing a rapid transformation. The tenacious principal, now in her second year, has already revamped and reorganized virtually every system and structure in the school, resulting in a significant uplift in the tone, climate, safety, and level of professionalism. She is skillfully accompanied in this work by her well-matched assistant principals. As a result, they function seamlessly together as a team in conveying high standards for teachers, students, and parents. A complete overhaul of the school's budget, schedule, classroom setup, and safety procedures now sees the school poised to deepen its work in pedagogy, curriculum, and collaboration.

The administrative team has put great effort into ensuring that members of the teaching staff are well matched to the school's needs and support the school's vision and mission. They have created numerous structures to support collaboration. Teachers are excited by the opportunity to work together to craft the school's agenda for moving forward. Most classrooms reflect student engagement as a high priority, as teachers strive to ensure that lessons are high energy and relevant to students' lives. Significant resources are poured into arts programs that the school sees as critical to developing a well-rounded student and increasing student engagement. Lively arts, drama, and music classes give students a chance to develop talents and showcase themselves outside of academics.

School leadership and staff have a very clear understanding of the goals and future direction of the school. The current curriculum development initiative has already had significant positive impact on the delivery of standards-based lessons to students, although purposeful student grouping is not consistently evident and there is a lack of differentiation in many classrooms. Teacher collaboration is a priority and some teams are moving ahead well, via the use of structured protocols and data analysis, but long- and short-term goal setting for targeted students and sub-groups are not occurring regularly. Although the members of the administrative team have set priorities among themselves with respect to individual teacher growth, they have not set goals for individual growth and teachers desire more ongoing and instructionally-oriented feedback. Some teachers offer very precise feedback to students through comments or the use of rubrics, but feedback is not coherently generated throughout the school.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Deeply reflective school leaders make effective ongoing decisions, resulting in very clear school goals and expectations for students and staff.
  - The principal and assistant principals meet daily to scrutinize individual student and teacher data and have restructured virtually every system and process as a result. They have redesigned service delivery to the significant special needs population, revamped the social studies department and created a block schedule in the middle school that incorporates “flex” time for remediation. The school has made several of these shifts mid-year, immediately addressing identified issues.
  - Actions taken as a result of careful analysis of the progress report, Learning Environment Survey and last year’s Quality Review have led to an overwhelming majority of staff, students, and parents supporting the school’s new direction and noting a sharp improvement in communication, attendance, and student engagement.
- Strong teacher collaboration is strengthening the school’s goal of moving from a “culture of congeniality” to a “culture of collegiality.”
  - The use of protocols during grade level collaborative meetings has elevated the level of professional conversation and has contributed to a greater degree of student-focused conversation. For example, the sixth grade team meets three times a week and focuses each meeting on a different aspect of problem solving for a targeted student.
  - The reconfigurations of classrooms and of administrative support, and a school-wide “wiki,” have created effective avenues for ongoing conversation outside of team meeting times. Mentoring for new teachers is taken very seriously and promotes genuine reflective practice. The middle school staff begins each morning with a “stand-up” meeting just before class begins that includes opportunities for communication and is effective in inspiring staff.
- The energetic staff plan and deliver engaging lessons that relate to students’ lives and experiences, and reflect carefully thought-out curricular choices.
  - The school’s belief that students learn best when material is taught with essential questions in mind is apparent in every room. Teachers have embraced this as a method of ensuring that units of study are relevant to students and connect to “big ideas”. Use of current music, interactive technology, and high quality literature connects content and process and is evident in most classes.
  - A major initiative for the school this year has been the writing of detailed content and grade level curriculum maps. This collaborative effort, while still relatively new, has already proved fruitful in promoting the development of standards-based classroom instruction and has helped to increase coherence across and within grades and content areas, as well as raising the overall level of rigor.

- The school has strategically prioritized a well-rounded education, including the arts, which has helped to increase attendance and students' interest in learning.
  - The principal is an expert budgetary manager, who has managed resources and scheduling so effectively that, despite the relatively small size of the school, they are able to fund two art teachers, a music teacher, a gym program, a yoga program, and an after-school program that supports sports and other extra curricular interests. Students are excited by these programs and are proud to share their talents with the school community.
- Significant improvements in the school's tone and climate have increased the sense of safety and security for all members of the school community.
  - There is a constant emphasis on accountability for all constituencies with regard to student behavior. Quiet hallways and class transitions were reported and observed. Parents, students, and teachers confirm that there is a positive difference in class behavior from previous years, resulting in a much calmer, safer community.
  - All students are greeted individually and "checked in" each morning by school leaders, engendering a sense of warmth and expectation. A successful advisory program, including some sessions organized by gender, has helped students feel confident that they each have someone they can go to for help. An interactive school website allows students, teachers, and parents to maintain close contact and has drastically improved communication between teachers, parents and students.
- The school has a deep understanding of the social, emotional, and academic standing of its students, including the unique needs of its sub-groups.
  - The school's youth development cabinet meets regularly to discuss individual students and track their academic progress. Collaborative teams that focus on special education students and English language learners also track the progress of these students. In response to concerns about communication, the school has developed progress reports to supplement the regular report cards, which help students and families have a clearer understanding of their grades.
  - The school has developed relationships with several external partners such as College Now, New York University, and Gear Up that have helped to strengthen opportunities for students, such as offering college classes. Students feel deeply supported in pursuing their interests.

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

- Continue developing supports, extensions, and common expectations to ensure differentiation of instruction and alignment of practice.
  - Students receive individual assistance from most teachers, but it is obtained before or after school and not during class. When interviewed, they confirmed that much teaching is whole class, focused on the same material and the same methods. This means that high achieving students

are not given the opportunity for more advanced coursework or challenged enough.

- Where grouping exists, it is not usually based purposefully on academic data, but on behavior, social groupings, or to utilize stronger students in support of weaker students, particularly in high school classes. Therefore, students do not receive instruction that is meaningfully differentiated in all their courses, and the needs of the most able students are not met.
- Deepen each team's approach to inquiry by analyzing data to develop goals for individuals and groups of students with specific needs.
  - Collaborative teams meet regularly to plan curriculum, problem solve, and share data, but they are generally not focused on targeted goal setting for specific students or groups as identified by data. As a result, they do not all identify specific change strategies and some groups of students are not making sufficiently rapid progress.
  - The staff is uniformly aware of the school's overarching goals and desired outcomes. However, precise goal setting for groups of students within classes is not consistently apparent. As a result, instruction is not differentiated sufficiently to ensure consistent growth for every group.
- Increase teacher observation and institute a system for professional goal setting that is focused on student learning and outcomes.
  - School leadership knows the strengths and weaknesses of their individual staff very well. Although the written feedback presented to teachers is highly detailed, teachers wish to experience more day-to-day feedback and receive more precise suggestions for improvement, not only in social-emotional arenas but with regards to instructional practice.
  - The administration has prioritized professional development and supports every teacher's growth. However, there is not yet an explicit goal setting process for teachers, and expectations are not tied to specific student needs. As a result, some teachers do not have student goals embedded in their planning and instruction.
- Develop greater consistency in providing student feedback to ensure that students and families understand strengths, weaknesses, and next steps.
  - There is budding evidence of meaningful feedback to students in a few classrooms. However, most work folders are sparse and feedback minimal. This means that most students only have a vague idea about what they need to improve and what their next steps should be.
  - Although the school has created progress reports, the comments on these reports are not explicit enough to be helpful in establishing next steps for students. The progress reports are chiefly focused on student behaviors such as attendance, class participation, or homework completion, and do not reference explicit examples of improvements made or skills that need reinforcing. This prevents parents from supporting their child's learning.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: Henry Street School for International Studies	△	▷	✓	+
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	

<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>	△	➤	✓	+			
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					
<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
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				
<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
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>							
△	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>	✓	<b>Proficient</b>	+	<b>Well Developed</b>