

Quality Review Report

2009-2010

Harry S. Truman High School

High School 455

**750 Baychester Avenue
Bronx
NY 10475**

Principal: Sana Nasser

Dates of review: March 23 – 25, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Jeffrey Soloff

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Harry S. Truman is a high school with 2212 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 52% Black, 43% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 26% special education students. Boys account for 59% of the students enrolled and girls account for 41%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 85.5%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Under the leadership of a strong, visible principal, this comprehensive high school has evolved into a well-run, safe school where four high quality, specialized academies attract students to the school from all over the City. A parent stated, "The principal has done an amazing job improving the school and making it a safe place for students," who in turn, exhibit respectful behavior and support the learning environment. School leaders make instructional and curricular decisions and offer programs at all academic levels that prepare students for their continuing education and career. Although differentiation was observed in some classrooms, it is not yet an embedded practice used to meet the needs of all students at their entry points and matched to their ongoing instructional requirement levels. Even so, the principal communicates the school's high expectations for academic performance to parents so that they are aware and have opportunities to become involved in their child's education.

Although horizontal (grade) and vertical (departmental) teams have been established, the school has not set measurable learning goals for all subgroups nor has it created a system to evaluate interim progress. Without these goals, teachers are not meeting fully the needs of all targeted students. Although inquiry teams have begun to analyze student work and data, they are not at a point where specific students and formative data are routinely studied. As a result, teachers are not using data sufficiently to drive instruction and student progress is being hindered.

Improving teacher practice is an important goal of the school leaders. Administrators perform frequent informal observations in order to monitor the delivery of instruction and improve pedagogy. Professional development opportunities are aligned to school-wide goals and these are leading to improved instructional practices as a result of both classroom observations and individual teacher's needs. School leaders meet after each marking period to analyze student passing rates and grades given by each teacher to assess the effectiveness of curricular, instructional and organization decisions. The decision to provide double math periods for grade 9 algebra students, as well a decision to provide subject area training for teachers of special education support services, are being closely monitored to see the impact on student performance.

Partnerships with external organizations greatly enhance the instructional program. A combination of academic and social service programs provide support for students and families. A program with Hunter College that trains students to become tutors raises the self-esteem of the students and gives them a stipend for their work.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders make informed and effective organizational decisions that align with instructional goals and support efforts toward improved learning outcomes so that students are college or career ready by graduation.
 - School leaders make purposeful decisions in the programming of students, assignment of personnel and allocation of resources so that all students are exposed to a wide variety of courses, athletic teams, and clubs. The separate academies provide specialized training in culinary arts, law and legal studies, pre-engineering and media, which enable students to prepare for their chosen careers.
 - The school's instructional goals reflect students' learning needs as determined by analysis of summative data, classroom observations, and special education students' Regents data. Each fall, the principal meets with recent graduates to discuss their personal experience and impressions of the school so that long-term adjustments to curriculum and programs are implemented to align with preparing students for college and raising student outcomes.
- High expectations for student performance, attendance, and behavior are effectively communicated to parents while actively involving them in school activities.
 - Expectations for student achievement are conveyed to parents through mailings, parent meetings, phone calls, and newsletters throughout the year. Teachers provide information to parents to help them accelerate their child's learning. School-wide attendance has increased to over 90% exclusive of long term absentees while overall academy attendance is 95%.
 - Parent workshops on ARIS and Daedelus software have been conducted so that parents are kept abreast of their child's achievement and attendance. A parent stated, "The principal listens to parents and values their input," in the decision-making process. Parents and students are currently involved in discussions about instituting a school-wide dress code in order to eliminate competition about student attire.
- The school successfully collaborates with community-based organizations to provide educational and social services that support and accelerate students' personal and academic growth.
 - Highly effective partnerships with businesses and organizations provide support and opportunities for all students to increase their learning. The New York City Math and Science Partnership successfully train students to become paid peer tutors. This results in improved student performance as evidenced by higher grades on the unit tests.
 - Organizations such as Episcopal Social Services provide workshops and support for parents and students in response to student and family needs. The learning leaders program also provides workshops for parents as

well as training parents to volunteer in the school. The Principal for a Day program allows corporate chief executive officers to experience life in a high school and then create external learning opportunities for students in the corporate world.

- The school leadership has established consistent structures for monitoring the effectiveness of teacher practice with a clear focus on deepening teacher learning in order to improve instructional practices

The highly visible principal spends a portion of each day visiting classrooms and making informal observations in order to assess instruction. Assistant principals are actively involved in this process by providing follow-up observations for teachers in need of additional support. This coherent approach to improving instruction, including formal observations and conferences, provides teachers with valuable feedback that improves their practice and drives differentiated professional development.

- The school leadership works cohesively to evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional, and organizational decisions in order to refine practice and programs to meet student needs.
 - School leaders meet frequently to evaluate scholarship reports from each marking period and make decisions about what skills need reinforcement and what practices need adjustments. Students' programs and teacher assignments are changed as a result of this analysis to better meet student needs.
 - An evaluation of grade 9 Regents math scores led to a curricular decision aimed at improving the passing rate. Students receive a double period of algebra in an effort to provide more in-depth instruction aimed at better preparation for the Regents. The passing rate improved from 34% to 44% in January 2010.
- Professional development opportunities that are aligned with the school's goals are provided on a formal and informal basis so that teachers can learn pedagogy that is more effective and, in turn, improve student achievement.
 - Professional learning opportunities are based on administrators' observations and teacher needs. Recent sessions on English as a second language methodology were offered and gave teachers the useful tools to teach these students in all subject areas resulting in raised learning outcomes.
 - Special education support service teachers frequently engage in peer observation in order to improve their own as well as their colleagues' practices.

What the school needs to improve

- Expand the school's approach to the gathering, analysis, and use of data at whole school, grade and individual student levels and extend the analysis to examine patterns and trends of subgroups in order to take timely action.
 - Currently, teacher teams meet to analyze data and discuss practice and student performance. However, teachers are not yet using data

consistently to plan data-driven instruction tailored for different targeted groups of students.

- The school does not yet have a uniform periodic assessment across all departments and as a result, school leaders are unable to identify trends accurately enough. This in turn, hinders teachers in their efforts to meet students' needs and their subsequent progress.
- Establish clear, measurable, and differentiated classroom level learning goals for all relevant subgroups and develop a system to monitor and evaluate progress so that adjustments are made in a timely manner.
 - The lack of established interim benchmarks across all subject areas inhibits the evaluation of some students' progress. As a result, their needs are not sufficiently met preventing them from excelling at an accelerated pace. Students are unable to articulate their next learning steps thereby inhibiting their academic progress.
 - A teacher team studying English language arts strategies identified higher and lower-achievers who were not making progress. However, neither learning goals nor benchmarks were established thereby limiting the effectiveness of this study.
- Support and monitor the growth of teacher teams to ensure that structured collaboration and inquiry work result in shared leadership and the implementation of adjustments to instruction aimed at improving learning.
 - Teacher teamwork has been expanded to include horizontal and vertical teams that are departmental and grade specific in order to improve student achievement. However, teams have not yet targeted groups of students to study and this inhibits each team's ability to grasp the effectiveness of their collaborative work.
 - The core inquiry team examines Task 3 results on the English language arts test of students receiving special education support services and related scaffolding strategies. The team has not decided on which specific students to focus and this limits the team's ability to monitor the impact of differentiated practices on student learning.
- Further promote strategic use of differentiation based on data so that lessons consistently reflect purposeful groupings, challenge all students and include tasks to accommodate different learning styles to maximize learning.
 - The school does not demonstrate consistent practice in differentiating instruction based on data. In some lessons, there is evidence of tiered readings and intentional grouping strategies, but in other classrooms grouping is random and individual learning needs are not taken into account. Generic assignments are given with no differentiation for higher and lower performing students. Instruction does not always engage students resulting in missed opportunities for students to make best progress.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: Harry S. Truman High School	△	▷	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<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	
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.				
<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>	△	▶	✓	+			
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			
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				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>	△	▶	✓	+			
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			
Overall score for Quality Statement 4				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>	△	▶	✓	+			
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				
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X			
Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	▶	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed