



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning**

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Townsend Harris

High School Q525

**149-11 Melbourne Ave
Queens
NY 11367**

Principal: Anthony D. Barbeta

**Date of review: January 14, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Joseph O'Brien**

The School Context

Townsend Harris is a high school with 1151 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 6% Black, 13% Hispanic, 22% White, and 58% Asian students. The student body includes 0% English language learners and 1% special education students. Boys account for 29% of the students enrolled and girls account for 71%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 97.0%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards	Additional Findings	Well Developed
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	Additional Findings	Well Developed
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels	Focus	Well Developed
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Celebration	Well Developed
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Additional Findings	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

School leaders consistently emphasize a culture of learning that communicates high expectations to the school community, provide training and have a system of accountability for those expectations. School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness and successfully partner with families.

Impact

Students and staff are immersed in a culture of mutual accountability for high expectations and professionalism, instruction and other elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching and families are successful partners in support of student progress toward those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders create high expectations for all staff, which is evidenced throughout the community through verbal and written structures (such as extensions, ongoing work-shops, staff handbook, school website) that emulate a culture where accountability is reciprocal between all constituents. Student handbooks denote clear expectations and workload for each year. Students receive three different handbooks during their years of study at Townsend Harris; a 9th grade high school and culture, an 11th grade advanced placement and a 12th grade handbook devoted to the college application process.
- All students, in addition to studying at least three years of modern language, also complete two years of Latin or classical Greek. Each 12th grader enrolls at Queens College during their senior year and completes 12 on campus college credits. Classes include a mandated course in great literature as well as one additional elective course of the student's choice. The school offers 21 advanced placement courses across all core disciplines.
- Sophomores, juniors and seniors may participate in independent original research programs in science and social studies. These programs culminate in entries to the Intel Science Talent Search, New York City Science and Engineering Fair, Siemens, Westinghouse and Junior Science Humanity Symposium and the International Science and Engineering Fair.
- Staff members implement effective strategies for communicating high expectations such as tasks encouraging inquiry, collaboration, and ownership that are clearly connected to college and career readiness so that all students are challenged to meet or exceed those expectations. Students write at least four major research projects each year in each core academic subject including math, history, science, and English language arts. Leadership courses require three such projects each semester.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use and create assessments, rubrics and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curriculum and offer a clear portrait of student mastery. The school is focused on the continual refinement of the use of common assessments to create a clear picture of student progress toward goals across grades and subjects, track progress and adjust curricular and instructional decisions that enable all students to demonstrate mastery.

Impact

Actionable and meaningful feedback that the school provides to students and teachers regarding student achievement enables all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities to demonstrate increased mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers and administrators articulate coherent reasons for assessment choices; assessments are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards in the curriculum. These choices deliver a range of data, some daily, some monthly, and some quarterly, to sustain collaborative inquiry and continuously improve instruction. Teacher created rubrics and assessments which align to the curricula and the Common Core Learning Standards were evident in seven of seven classes.
- Teachers collaborate on designing and/or modifying common grade-wide, curriculum-aligned assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are customized to address data-defined student and sub-group needs. These tools are used by teachers and administrators to track progress towards goals across grades and subject areas and make instructional decisions. School leaders and teacher teams created dedicated English courses to directly meet the needs of students struggling in decoding and writing.
- Teacher teams create their own assessments to gain a better portrait of student mastery. Teacher created rubrics and assessments which align to the curricula and aid student comprehension on use of claim and counterclaim and identifying textual evidence were observed in seven of seven classes.
- The Daedalus online grade book and attendance tracker provides students, teachers, school leaders and families with an online communication platform. The school uses it as a hub for all communication within the community. Families receive real-time academic and student behavioral updates, including progress reports, a listing of demerits and student behavior logs. Since September, 2014 over 280,000 e-mails between students, teachers and school leaders have been sent. All science labs are written and graded online. Student next steps are provided along with hyperlinks to additional resources and extensions.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts, rigorous habits and higher-order skills that are emphasized in curricula and academic tasks and are embedded in a coherent way across grades and subjects.

Impact

The school's curricula provide coherence across grades and subject areas that promote college and career readiness for all students so that all learners, including high need subgroups, must demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers can articulate how curricula, across and within grade levels are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and scaffold student success to promote college and career readiness for all students. The school uses teacher created curricula adapted from multiple resources including AMAPS and Engage New York.
- School leaders and teachers integrate the instructional shifts by making purposeful connections between the shifts and the topics in each subject both within a grade and as students advance through the grades so as to promote college and career readiness. All students in ninth grade are programmed to take a course on essay writing. The course serves to support improved student essay writing ability and prepare students for the next level. If students need additional support, they are programmed for an additional English language arts course devoted to literacy support.
- Rigorous habits and higher order skills such as those that require students to create their own meaning, integrate skills into processes, and use what they have learned to solve real world problems are identified, defined, and embedded within curricula and academic tasks coherently across grades and subjects. Each semester students present performance based assessments to extend their learning in all course subject areas twice a year. Students may choose to demonstrate their thinking across multiple platforms and artistic media such as composing music, creating a public service announcement video, or debating current political issues in a school wide election simulation.
- Advanced students may take one of three entry points into calculus including calculus for business, advanced placement calculus AB, and advanced placement calculus BC.
- Teachers across grades and subjects use student work and data to plan and refine curricula and academic tasks in order to cognitively engage all students, including lowest and highest achieving students. The biology teacher team used state exam item analyses and student work to evaluate curricular gaps in Living Environment and determine key adjustments to meet the needs of all students.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	---------------------	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts. Instructional practices strategically provide multiple entry points and high-quality supports and extensions into the curriculum.

Impact

All learners including English language learners and students with disabilities are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and are able to demonstrate higher order thinking skills in student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers provide support and feedback to students on writing assignments using an online editing platform for English language arts and the ninth grade writing process classes. Students are able to view multiple drafts and review ongoing lists of teacher feedback noting student next steps.
- Across the majority of classrooms, teacher practices consistently reflect and support school wide beliefs about how students learn best. Teachers and administrators can articulate how those beliefs are informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching, are aligned to curricula and shaped by teacher team and faculty input. In seven of seven classes, student to student discussions were observed. In four of seven classes, student to student collaboration was evident. Student-centered activities including Socratic seminar, pair/think/write/shares and student presentations were utilized.
- In seven of seven classes, instruction was aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. Questions included “How do we find the area of a prism?” and “How do we integrate with respect to Y?” Student self-reflection was observed in student work products online and posted in hallways and on bulletin boards.
- Across classrooms teachers strategically use scaffolds, questioning, opportunities for choice, and other teaching practices to create a variety of ways for students to access the content, learning project, or task. Students are thereby supported in their learning by different possible endpoints so that all show mastery of the learning objectives and corresponding standards. Scaffolds, supports and extensions into the curricula were seen for students with disabilities, struggling students, and advanced students. Scaffolds included the use of visual aids, cues, sentence stems, total physical response, graphic organizers, clear speech and student presentations.
- Student research and seminar papers are carefully reviewed to provide students with feedback so that they may publish in scholarly journals. Feedback with detailed next steps task descriptions, and rubrics on student work products are evident in hallway bulletin boards.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	---	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry based, structured professional collaborations that strengthen teacher instructional capacity and promote the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams systematically analyze key elements of teacher and student work for students they share or with whom they are focused.

Impact

The school’s structured professional collaborations result in school-wide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all learners and shared improvements in teacher practice and mastery of goals for students with disabilities, English language learners and advanced students.

Supporting Evidence

- The vast majority of teachers collaborate in professional teams where they develop and implement school wide instructional practices, embedding the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts to continuously promote improved achievement for all learners. The English language arts and history departments have partnered to design a cross curricular humanities program devoted to writing using historical documents as primary and secondary sources and a balance of nonfiction and fiction texts.
- Teacher teams create rubric assessments and share resources via Google Drive. Teacher teams meet once per week to plan labs, coordinate lessons, create equivalent exams, review outcomes, and revise instruction.
- Teacher teams effectively implement systems to monitor a variety of student data and classroom practices that inform instruction leading to the achievement of goals for individual as well as groups of students. School leaders noticed that ninth graders were struggling in writing essays. School leadership, the English language arts teacher teams and a dedicated writing professor from Queens College created a class devoted to teaching writing to support all ninth graders. Entitled “the writing process“, the course is designed to support students in expository argument and persuasive writing and build writing endurance across multiple drafts.
- The history teacher team leads a school-wide election simulation in which the current year's political debates and democratic practices are employed to teach students political lessons and better understand the debates and issues. This semester long activity contextualizes the learning and provides meaningful applications of student skills and syntheses of historical knowledge and current events thereby raising academic rigor and meaning for all students.