



The Young Women's Leadership School of Astoria

Principal: Dr. Allison Persad

School Overview

Key Features Include: Rigorous Instruction, Mastery-based Learning, Project-based Learning, College-going Culture

The Young Women's Leadership School of Astoria (TYWLS of Astoria) is a single-sex New York City public school that was established in 2006. TYWLS of Astoria is part of an establishment that nurtures the intellectual curiosity and creativity of young women by supporting the 'whole girl' in order to maximize academic achievement, social-emotional well-being, and postsecondary success. The school approaches learning in a dynamic, participatory fashion, encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning. They are a college-bound initiative (CBI) school that serves middle and high school students.

Spotlight on Rigorous Learning Experiences

Mastery-Based Learning (21st century skills)

TYWLS of Astoria is annualized with systematized **"Shared Outcomes"** across all courses grades 6-12. These outcomes are the larger competencies that all students need to be successful. They are: create, collaborate, communicate, innovate, discern, plan, argue, be precise, investigate, and conclude. Each shared outcome connects to discrete, content-specific **outcome targets** and subsequent vertically spiraled rubrics. Targets are limited to 15 per year-long course to ensure that students have multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery. Targets are connected to Common Core Learning Standards, Next Generation Science Standards, and appropriate state standards. Within an outcome, students either Meet Standards (MS), Exceed Standards (ES) or are "Not Yet" Meeting Standards (NY). The school uses the grading platform **Jumpro.pe**, which has an algorithm that converts NY, MS and ES to a number grade for the overall course, but the competencies are reported as NY, MS, and ES. This feature can be turned on or off at different times of the year to encourage students, parents, and teachers to speak in outcome terminology instead of the traditional number system.

Project Based Learning and Intensives

Project-Based Learning (PBL) curriculum design is a throughline in all TYWLS of Astoria courses. The instructional team has embarked on a multi-year professional learning journey in order to transition the school to a full-PBL model, using two-week intensives as a PBL teaching and learning lab. During intensives, students' regularly scheduled courses pause and teacher teams dedicate ten full days, five hours a day, working with the same group of multi-grade learners. Intensives are a project-based teaching and learning lab and focus on 21st century skills, literacy, and real-world experiences, including visits from experts in students' area of study. Intensives also focus on field trips to meet experts in their workplace, or to see the field of study in action. Students collaborate and work deeply for two weeks, culminating in a public expo at the end of their work. Intensives are a chance to try something students have never experienced or to dive deeper into something they love.

Fall 2019 Intensive Samples:

- **Take My Word For It** - In Take My Word For It, students explore the various ways to create and record an audio story by analyzing the podcast as a genre. Students produce their own five-minute podcasts that are published on the school website's podcast channel.
- **Verizon App Entrepreneurs** - In an increasingly digital and technologically driven society, the need for innovative thinkers and socially engaged citizens has become a necessity for progress and success in a globalized community. Student groups create mobile apps for small businesses in their community, working to close the mobile technology gap. This intensive culminates in a "Shark-Tank" style presentation of student-created apps to representatives from Verizon.
- **Escape The Room** - Students create, organize and execute their very own Escape the Room. We consult with experts, study cryptography and problem solving, and visit Escape the Room experiences. Students in this course become experts in problem-solving, mystery writing, performing, and working with their hands.

Core Design Information

Shared Outcomes and Spiraled Rubrics

“The Young Women’s Leadership School is focused on skills such as Argue, Be Precise, Collaborate, Communicate, Conclude, Discern, Innovate, Investigate, and Plan. These skills are the primary organizing structure for the school.

All teachers use the same rubrics for each of the ten skills that indicate performance levels 6-12. In some cases, such as ELA, they are organized around bands 9-10 and 11-12 rather than grade levels as indicated by the Common Core ELA standards. TYWLS refers to these as *spiraled rubrics* that are organized and vertically aligned so that students can see their skill development over different performance levels.

The spiraling rubrics for skills require two schoolwide practices, not usually found in traditional schools, that can help drive toward mastery-based learning. First, ongoing calibration is particularly important for teachers to credential the different performance levels of each skill consistently. Second, given the flexibility in content, TYWLS use curriculum mapping process to look at what content is being covered in each grade. Teachers are beginning to capture the overall curriculum, including topics, essential questions, performance tasks, and the evidence of learning submitted by students.”

Excerpted from [Competency Works](#) profile on TYWLS of Astoria.

SHARED OUTCOMES				
CREATE Produce or develop a product for expression.	INNOVATE Develop new and helpful ways of looking at opportunities challenges, and problems.	DISCERN View, read and listen with focused attention to what matters.	CONCLUDE Infer meanings, analyze information, and develop valid ideas, based on evidence and analysis.	BE PRECISE Accurately represents solutions, ideas, and language.
COMMUNICATE Make ideas and information understood by being mindful of audience, purpose, and setting.	INVESTIGATE Design and gather appropriate information to complete an inquiry.	COLLABORATE Work effectively with others to achieve common goals.	PLAN Manage time, reflect, and persevere to achieve goals.	ARGUE Defend conclusions with sound logic and valid evidence.

Collaborative and Proactive Solutions Model

Collaborative & Proactive Solutions (CPS) is the non-punitive, non-adversarial, trauma-informed model of care designed by Dr. Ross Greene. This model is formerly referred to at TYWLS of Astoria as “Lost at School,” based on the original text by Dr. Greene. The model is based on the premise that challenging behavior occurs when the expectations being placed on a student exceed the student’s capacity to respond adaptively, and that some learners are lacking the skills to handle certain demands and expectations. So the emphasis of the model isn’t on learners’ challenging behavior, just the manner in which they are expressing the fact that there are expectations they’re having difficulty meeting. The model focuses on identifying the skills the student is lacking and the expectations he or she is having difficulty meeting. Then the goal is to help learners and caregivers solve those problems rather than trying to modify behavior through the application of rewards and punishments. In the CPS model, the goal is to foster a collaborative partnership between adults and learners and to engage learners in solving the problems that affect their lives. ([Lives in the Balance CPS Model](#))

Advisory with a PYD Approach

The center of the TYWLS model is relationship building—every student has one adult supporting her, communicating with her parents, coaching her in academics, and intervening if an issue arises. Advisors closely coach students on their academics using an online grading system and students’ digital and physical work portfolios as “evidence” to ground discussions. When an advisor sits down with a student for academic coaching, the student logs in to her academic profile and the advisor guides the student to discuss specific areas of success and areas of growth.

Each school year kicks off with a two-day advisory camp, “Advisory Camp TYWLS” (ACT) to set the intention for advisory for the year. Advisories spend the first two days together and in partnership with their big or little sister advisory. The days consist of community building and norm setting and culminate in a “March for Change”, which is an opportunity for the whole school to come together in support and celebration of the issues they are passionate about.

The TYWLS of Astoria **Advisory Mission Statement** is the thread for the year: *The Young Women’s Leadership School of Astoria strengthens the mind, body, and soul of our students by providing daily opportunities to build self-confidence. We encourage cooperative behavior through team-building exercises and acquire life skills by developing meaningful peer and advisory relationships. An integral component of our advisory program is service to our in-school, local and global community. The end goal is to gain understanding, appreciation and to celebrate the diversity within our shared community. Our primary focus is to equip our students with the tools and experiences they will need to become educated and productive citizens, as future leaders of tomorrow.*