



# The Bright Boys: A History of Townsend Harris High School (Contributions to the Study of Education)

*Eileen Lebow*

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Named for the man who brought free higher education to city youths unable to afford the two local private colleges, Townsend Harris High School reminded generations of New Yorkers of the city's debt to him. Its mission was to prepare young men for success at City College, where education was free to graduates of the city's public high schools. The school's three year course was tough and rigorous. Students learned to survive and perform, or they left.

By the 1930s, Townsend Harris was synonymous for bright boys, students who scored high on the yearly Regents examinations, but whose athletic ability, hard as they tried, was something of a joke. The author traces the development of the preparatory school from the first years of its beginning in 1849 to its 1942 closing by Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia amid much controversy.

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