



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Sheepshead Bay High School

High School 495

3000 Avenue X

Brooklyn

NY 11235

Principal: Ms Reesa Levy

Dates of review: October 10 – 12, 2006

Reviewers: Martin Pavey and Roger Brown

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Sheepshead Bay High School is a large, multi-cultural high school in Brooklyn. There are currently 3150 students enrolled, in grades 9 through 12. Students are mostly Black (63%), with 13% Hispanic, 12% Asian and 12% White. 580 students are English language learners, and around 400 are special education students. The proportion of Title 1 eligible students is not reflected by the 27% which have so far returned application forms.

Average attendance at 77% is lower than in similar schools, but has risen from 68% recently and has been affected by the large number of students who remain on the register, but who have seldom or never attended. Apart from these, most students have good levels of attendance.

The school provides a wide range of courses, including generous sports and music programs, courses in law and health education, and Fastrack programs for under-credited students. A higher than average number of students graduate in the Regents Examinations and many go on to college, including some to competitive and demanding courses.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has already achieved a huge overall improvement and purpose, relationships and behavior are improving throughout the school.
- Teachers are now using data well, at all levels, to place students on suitable courses and check on the progress of individuals.
- The team of assistant principals works very well together, using data well to check subject performance and arrange support for students.
- This good analysis of data by faculties has led to extensive positive changes in the curriculum provided.
- Teachers know students very well and are committed to improving their performance and prospects.
- Students greatly appreciate the major improvements in the guidance, support and extra activities now provided.

What the school needs to improve

- Analyze and use data more consistently across faculty to improve academic achievement.
- Continue the drive to encourage attendance and punctuality.
- Its efforts to involve parents as partners in their children's education.
- Improve teaching methods, to satisfy students' hunger for practical, interactive learning.
- Develop targets and share these with students to help individuals to reach their goals.
- Compare the performance in external tests and examinations of students on the new Fastrack courses with that of students in previous years, to assess the impact of the program.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient and improving school. The new principal arrived in 2005 after some changes in the administration. Parents, staff and students report that the school was then suffering from major problems in morale and behavior. These problems have vanished. The school has been transformed in recent months into a happy, aspiring community, and students speak very highly of it. Students value the principal's positive, encouraging leadership. This is reflected in the warm support given by assistant principals and staff.

This greatly improved atmosphere has not yet been reflected in test and examination results, which continue at a low level. Overall results are to some extent impeded by the number of students with names on the register, but who seldom or never attend. To challenge a history of under-achievement among a large minority of new students, well-devised courses have very recently been launched. All freshmen join the Success Academy, with enhanced provision in English and mathematics. For under-credited students joining in the 9th grade, there is a well-attended Fastrack program, and a similar program caters for those who remain under-credited when they reach age 16 or are over-age for that stage. Much of the previous curriculum has been rewritten by the staff, who are therefore committed to it. The school now wants to give every student the opportunity to succeed. This positive, generous approach is starting to work.

Many students attend well, and some make great efforts to reach the school, although overall attendance is below average. Behavior is now very good. The school is an open, friendly and cheerful community.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school knows its students very well, and this leads to a confident, collaborative atmosphere. In this positive climate, teachers are increasingly using data to improve students' prospects. Results of Regents examinations are used to help students improve their skills and increase their prospects of graduation. Assistant principals make good use of the data they get at the end of each marking period. They hold faculties to account for their performance, comparing with them the progress made by the different groups of students, for example special education students or English language learners.

In teachers' use of data in the classroom, there are areas of good practice, and areas where practice could be further developed. Many teachers are clearly aware of the range of data and its application, though some focus mainly on simply teaching the subject content rather than in consulting data so they can adjust their teaching to match it more closely to students' needs. More could be done to make all teachers aware of how data can be used to set immediate interim targets for individuals, and help students to achieve them, as steps toward success in tests and examinations. Many teachers make good use of test results and assess students' work helpfully, though there is not consistency in

offering students clear diagnostic comments which would help them improve their work. An important opportunity for the clear use of data arises with the introduction of the new Fastrack courses. It will be helpful to know how students on these courses are doing in relation to the performance of similar groups in recent years, to measure the effectiveness of the program.

Teachers use data most effectively when they are planning the most suitable courses and programs for students. This is their strongest use of data, and has made the curriculum much more flexible and interesting.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student’s next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student’s learning.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

Planning and setting of goals is already proficient, but is often recent and requires time to prove itself. There has been a huge improvement in students’ attitudes and purpose. Now that they are behaving well, the school can help them realize their potential. Planning has taken on a new perspective and is now highly collaborative, at all levels. For example, faculties have relished the freedom to plan a curriculum which responds to the needs of their students, and students themselves respond with enthusiasm, especially if the curriculum offered is active. They love getting involved, and say they are getting more chances to do so. ‘I don’t like sitting, I like doing’, said one able student who wanted more things to do, not listen to.

Good collaboration now exists between the principal, assistant principals and faculties, and this has led to an increasing sophistication in the use of data to plan new courses and activities, to help students catch up and succeed. Parents have welcomed the chance to become more engaged in the process of developing the school, particularly in the production of a new Comprehensive Educational Plan. This has very clear strategies for monitoring and review, and is already reflecting the ambitious developments the school has planned together. However, only a minority of parents are closely involved in their children’s education. Teachers comment that achieving greater involvement from parents would greatly help both teachers and students, for example in making homework completed more consistently.

Accelerating students’ learning is a vital task at this school, because it inherits a large minority of students which has already failed to profit from education, often many times. Looking closely at data reveals the students who have already under-achieved, and those at risk of so doing. Immediate action is taken on their arrival as freshmen by providing a range of active programs, entitled Success Academy, to give everyone the best chance. There is Fastrack A for students who have failed all their subjects in the freshman year, and special programs for those with special needs or who need help with English. Similar programs exist for older students. Now all students have the chance to catch up, and the most academically able have the chance to profit from advanced teaching in the honors academy.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school's curriculum is one of its strengths, though many aspects are very recent. As described above, the main curriculum is ably supported by generous extra programs. The combined effect is impressive. For example, there are electives which prepare students for graduate programs, a huge sports program, with much competitive success reflected in a glittering display of trophies, programs for the more and less academically able students; help for English language learners, a 'Council for Unity' program for those who need continuing help to improve behavior and attitudes, and programs to make sure that no child remains left behind. When the main day is over, a three-hour program of activities takes over, with plenty of sports, music and the performing arts.

For the majority of students who attend regularly, the school has much challenge to offer. They experience life in a friendly, positive, multi-cultural atmosphere. Very many students take advantage of this. Several say that they love school, but that school has a way of exhausting them, there is so much to get done and join in. With such a range, it is hard to see why attendance is not 100%.

Students appreciate the positive relationships with adults and between students. They know that they have many teachers and others in school to help and guide them. The school provides a good model of citizenship and cooperation. For example, the security staff help keep good order, often with humor and understanding, and the school is very clean and free of litter and graffiti. The good work of the support staff is respected, and greatly helps the positive atmosphere around the school. Attendance staff work with great dedication, and have made a very welcome reduction in the number of students who are on the register, but not attending. They know that each name which never shows up could be a child at risk, and are determined to trace them, for their own safety. The parent coordinator, counselors and other staff give welcome professional support to students and families.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The principal and other leaders have a detailed knowledge of the school and select staff with care. Once on the faculty, staff are well provided with professional development. Their performance is carefully discussed and these discussion result in well-chosen training for their further development. Full training days are thoughtfully planned.

Teachers are clearly aware of how well they teach and how they can improve. School leaders observe lessons frequently, and teachers often discuss their work with each other and with faculty leaders. Many teachers know how they can make their lessons interesting and relevant, but a few are less aware, and continue to instruct the subject without involving students in the process of learning. The principal and senior colleagues are aware what needs to be done, and have arranged for some staff to attend a course, 'Eye on the Prize', which helps teachers understand afresh the challenge and privilege of teaching fresh minds.

The principal is highly respected by all sections of the school community. Parents, staff and students all confirm how much she has achieved in so short a time. The school has turned around because this principal has cherished everyone and has cared for their well-being in a practical, supporting way. Because of this, the school runs very smoothly. Voices are seldom raised, everyone gets on well together, and students are happy that teachers listen to them and work with them as partners.

The school is effective at involving a range of outside agencies and professionals in giving help and advice. It gives good personal guidance and teachers have established a tutorial system to give students who need it another chance for help and companionship.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school has developed good procedures to monitor the work of its students. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good, and increasingly effective. The school now has a clearer understanding of long-term absence. It is good at monitoring and reviewing students' progress, and has positively involved all students in this process. Until recently, students were unaware of the contents of their transcripts, but they are now in no doubt of what they have achieved and what they need to do.

Despite this good work, the school has not yet sufficiently raised achievement to reach the required results in the State tests. Until recently, the emphasis was on improving behavior and morale, and only now is there more focus on raising academic achievement. This is reflected in the Comprehensive Education Plan, which has been a collaborative exercise. Faculty have had a large role in revisions to the curriculum, giving them increased ownership of what they are teaching. These developments have had a positive impact on students' attitudes, and the school is in a good position to continue to improve.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Sheephead Bay High School (HS 495)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score		X	

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each student, classroom, grade level, 		X	
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ethnic groups, English Language Learners, special education students* 		X	
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all other categories of interest to the school* 		X	
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1		X	

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.		X	
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.		X	
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.		X	
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2		X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.			X
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.		X	
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.		X	
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.		X	
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X	