



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Boys and Girls High School

**High School 455
1700 Fulton Street
Brooklyn
NY 11213**

Principal: Spencer Holder

**Dates of review: March 5 - 10, 2008
Lead Reviewer: Corinne Brown**

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

Overall evaluation

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

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Boys and Girls High School is a high school with 3613 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 91% Black, 7.5% Hispanic, 0.5% White, 0.5% Asian students 0.5% other students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 58% of the students enrolled and girls account for 42%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 64.7%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 65% eligibility.

Boys and Girls High School is the largest high school in Brooklyn and draws students from over 100 middle schools citywide. Located in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area, it remains the only large high school in the neighborhood and has an increasing number of students who enter with low literacy and numeracy, or designated as part of the special education student population. This group's numbers continue to increase and currently over 19% of students receive instructional support services.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The passionate principal drives positive change through honest dialogue and transparency.
- The cabinet works cohesively with determination and energy to improve student outcomes by achieving greater consistency and rigor in all areas.
- The school uses a wide and increasing range of qualitative and quantitative data to assess performance and plan accordingly.
- There is good collaboration among the dedicated and caring staff, which includes many former students, and a strong sense of community.
- Professional development addresses teacher, student and school needs and is an ongoing focus.
- Extensive extra-curricular opportunities enhance the broad curriculum, which includes a varied arts program.
- Formal and informal support for students in greatest need enables them to make good progress.
- The welcoming environment is bright, well ordered and safe with good facilities for student development.
- Respectful relationships between staff and students, including through the effective personal mentoring initiative, result in shared high expectations.
- Parents appreciate the open communication with the school and the positive effects it has on student lives.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend the effective use of technology as an assessment, instruction and learning tool by all teachers.
- Refine the planning of all lessons in the light of data to address different learning styles and intelligences through varied student-centered activities.
- Continue to address factors affecting reported attendance.
- Explore greater opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration to reinforce literacy and other skills that affect overall achievement.
- Ensure all goals and targets set across the school are measurable and have interim checkpoints to monitor the progress toward them.
- Define explicit goals for departments and teachers that align with whole school goals and share a common language.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made some progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Boys and Girls High School retains the positive, family feel from the past in a bright and well-ordered building while responding and being proactive about its changing population. “The Legacy Continues,” is one of several school maxims. The school benefits from strong leadership. Some internal restructuring in response to changing needs, is generating more consistency of systems and approaches. This is increasing accountability among all staff for all groups of students. The school is meeting significant challenges with determination, energy and enthusiasm. Many students face significant emotional and social difficulties that affect learning. The school is sharpening its practice and consolidating the many good initiatives that are in place to make further improvements.

The school provides wide-ranging opportunities for students to express themselves and achieve academic success using the excellent facilities. It communicates high expectations well to the school community. Respect characterizes all relationships. Most students are very committed and attend regularly. Teachers increasingly collaborate. They increasingly plan differentiated, interesting lessons that engage students based on data. This is not yet consistent across the school. Some effective cross-curricular planning reinforces concepts and skills mastery in some areas. The school has not yet fully explored the links that reinforce literacy and comprehension skills. Data analysis informs planning across the school. Not all goals are measurable and have inbuilt interim checkpoints to monitor progress towards them.

Much work has taken place following the recommendations of the previous Quality Review and this is ongoing. Students have wider opportunities to express their views. They have a considerably raised awareness regarding vocational opportunities, particularly through performing arts programs. Such work remains a high priority. There is a clearer definition of whole school goals, which directly inform departmental planning. Differentiation is a major area that the school continues to address in order to reach its student population more effectively. The school has improved the systems regarding attendance. The work of the inquiry team is already influencing the school and supporting the concentrated efforts regarding attendance. Research based on its target group means there are plans to improve the immediate sense of connection with the school community for all freshmen.

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 the student’s progress over time.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The importance of the use of data in the evaluation of performance and planning for improvement underpins the work of the school and is continually high profile. As a result, there is a wide and increasing range of both qualitative and quantitative data in use across the school. Transparency in its analysis and impact marks a change in culture for the school. Regents and scholarship reports are the main sources that are universally used. Tools such as High School Scheduling and Transcripts, Scantron and Easy Grade Pro support standards-based testing and assessment. This means that the school is able to track and compare the performance of classes, groups, grades and cohorts as well as the individual. Teachers contact families about students who “cut” lessons because of emailed analysis of data. The administration, department supervisors and teams regularly access and utilize all information to assess performance, plan professional development and revise plans.

The school notices trends and interrogate group data. It noted that the achievement gap for incoming freshmen was increasing, so changed several systems as a result. The impact is already showing and the process continues to evolve. The special education assistant principal has oversight for compliance regarding individual student education plans. The school now tests all students against state standards. Modification information informs practice within classrooms. Changes to testing routines decrease any sense of difference. The doubling of special education student numbers has resulted in the integration of specialist teachers within the general education departments. Teachers receive support and training mainly through this route. As a result, the school provides comprehensive support for special education students and English language learners. The school serves English language learners in three different groupings cross-grade based on proficiency levels in English. African American males constitute a large proportion of the student population. Their performance has resulted in shifts in planning, emphasis and resourcing across the school. Consequently, there are increased student participation rates in English language arts and math. Although the school tries to compare itself with similar school in the area, this is becoming increasingly difficult because of the restructuring of other large schools into small schools. It primarily compares its own progress over time.

Teachers are at different levels in their ability to use a range of data. Staff receive professional development through their departments and the inquiry team. Currently not all teachers across the school regularly utilize the systems that are available online, but receive a hard copy. Teachers’ confidence and consistency in the use of technology is improving through personalized professional development.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student’s next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student’s learning.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The whole school goals provide the umbrella under which all departments work. These are realistic and measurable. Staff are exposed to data, which informs planning in regular faculty conferences and meetings. There is an improved sense of accountability across the school. Students who enter with low literacy and math levels, or are absentees, are the focus of intensive support across the school. Scholarship report analysis identified that individuals and courses or classes required interventions. Interventions are having some noticeable impact, but longer-term progress is not yet measurable. There are generally good systems in place, and a caring staff, to ensure that those in need receive suitable and timely support. Supplemental instruction during the extended day is in addition to day courses for math, science and English language arts. A personal student mentoring program by teachers and greatly appreciated by students is showing good results.

Positive affirmations are evident throughout the school and the school community shares high expectations. These are reinforced by guidebooks, assemblies, formal and informal reporting and frequent personal feedback. Incentives, rewards and recognition programs are inbuilt. Parents involved with the school appreciate the open communication and the positive effects it has on student lives. One parent commented, "They kind of saved his life here." The school works strenuously to improve parent or caregiver participation.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Overall, the school follows the workshop model of instruction and the curriculum is standards based. It now supplements end of marking period data by tests and quizzes. The school is increasingly exploring alternative ways of demonstrating and assessing learning. Not all staff use technology effectively as a learning, assessment and instruction tool. There is an ongoing program of skill development in technology and instructional practice. The broad curriculum includes opportunities for expression through the arts. An extensive program of extra-curricular opportunities using the excellent facilities available enriches this. The school has highly successful sports teams, with performing arts and a rich selection of other programs, as well as Saturday and after school academic groups.

There is good collaboration among many groups of staff and this is encouraged. At least 37 staff are former students, which attests to the strong sense of community and personal investment. Consequently, the school tone is respectful and warm. Teachers feel accountable for academic progress and provide social and emotional support for students. In the best lessons, teachers take account of performance, individual need and learning styles with varied opportunities to demonstrate learning. Not all lessons have sufficient rigor, pace and variety to engage all students. Careful use is made of the school schedule and budget to provide for changing needs. Advanced placement courses and additional software to enhance literacy and math skills are some examples.

Students feel comfortable and safe in school. They believe staff are accessible, including the principal. Students feel heard in the supportive environment. They report formalized advisory and mentoring programs are beneficial. Student attendance is an ongoing priority. Rigorous systems are now in place, which positively influences data. Early indications show a dramatic reduction in the number of reported long-term absences. The school is working hard to cater better for all students, and so maintain and improve attendance overall.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Supervisors, assistant principals and the principal have a thorough understanding of teachers' strengths through frequent formal and informal observations and discussions. Teachers receive good feedback and support, particularly through the departments. The administration places great emphasis on working professionally with teachers in the light of whole school goals to "raise their game". The school is creating a teachers' center.

Grade and subject goals are set following scholarship reports. Program revision and professional development has resulted in an improvement of 12% overall so far this year in music scholarship. Teachers make informal support networks and take opportunities for beneficial intervisitation that improves practice. Some English language arts and social studies teachers co-teach. The school is mindful of the benefits of cross-curricular approaches. At present, the opportunities to reinforce literacy and other skills that affect overall achievement are not sufficiently in place. Teachers feel well supported and that their voice is heard. New teachers in particular benefit from formal mentoring and “buddy” teacher assistance. Deans, guidance and paraprofessionals receive supportive professional development.

The school has a student-centered focus. Guidance and other support services encourage students well to reach graduation. Clear structures and firm boundaries mean students know what is expected of them. Discipline is good. The principal is a highly visible but accessible presence in the hallways. An initial “zero tolerance” policy at the start of the year saw a marked reduction in the rate of suspensions. The building is calm and well-ordered with staff trained to motivate students and de-escalate situations. Partnerships with community based and other organizations enhance the student learning experience, such as the “Brooklyn Steppers” marching band, Veterans’ Hospital and many sports and other organizations.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The school is reflective and evaluates itself well. The principal shares his passion with the administration and staff who care about the individual within this large setting. The school shares transparency and honest dialogue about data, change and goals with students in many areas. All are committed to improving student outcomes and setting realistic goals. The Comprehensive Education Plan, devised with the school leadership team, aligns with the principal’s performance review and department goals. However, these do not have formal interim checkpoints to monitor progress toward them. The school uses each marking period to evaluate performance of classes, groups and departments but does not link these to defined targets for teachers, courses and classes. Much good work occurs in departments in line with whole school goals but there is no consistent language and format across the school to discuss the minutiae of instructional goals.

Each marking period sees reflection and action to enhance student success. Guidance counselors are fully involved in this. An English senior class did not perform as expected. The school put an extra daytime class and after-school credit-recovery program in place to good effect. The music industry course is increasing engagement. The school builds on experience to inform the next phase of planning. Plans for the next stage of school development are underway in the light of data, with a particular focus on further bridging the achievement gap, increasing attendance and extending differentiation. The work of the inquiry team is leading research-based initiatives regarding freshmen attitudes and self-esteem. The school has a long and honorable history as a neighborhood focus. It enjoys a high profile in the wider area for its sporting success. The school community is working comprehensively to raise its game in all respects and build on the academic improvements already evident, so that it is, “The Pride and Joy of Bed-Stuy.”

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Boys and Girls High School	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
Quality Score			X		

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

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?			X		
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?			X		
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?			X		
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?			X		
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?			X		
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?			X		
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X		

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?			X		
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?			X		
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?			X		
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?				X	
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?			X		
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X		

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?			X		
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?			X		
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?		X			
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X		

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.					
To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?			X		
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?			X		
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?			X		
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?			X		
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?			X		
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 4					
			X		

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.					
To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?		X			
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?		X			
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?			X		
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?			X		
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?			X		
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5					
			X		

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped