



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

**Quality Review Report
Office of Accountability
2008-2009**

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

The Cobble Hill High School of American Studies

High School 519

**Baltic Street
Brooklyn
NY 11201**

Principal: Kenneth Cuthbert

Dates of review: December 10- 11, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Christina Lewis

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Cobble Hill High School is a high school with 774 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 65% Black, 30% Hispanic, 2% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 25% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 78%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 74% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The Cobble Hill High School of American Studies has made good progress since the last Quality Review, seen in the continually improving performance and progress of students. The principal is open and honest in his evaluation that there is still more work to do, explaining, "We are not there yet!" The school very effectively uses a wide range of data to understand and target individual needs. As a result, students are fully aware of the high expectations the school has for their success and know what they are aiming for. The school provides good support for students with special educational needs and the small group of English language learners. Wide ranges of external and internal support services are used very effectively in supporting students, particularly those identified at risk of not graduating. However, the school has yet to further disaggregate data to monitor other subgroups within the school population, such as gender, ethnicity and very high achievers. The inquiry team has successfully encouraged teachers in the use of data to improve student outcomes. In addition it has highlighted that mentoring students can be a very powerful way of enhancing students academically, socially and emotionally. Currently, the school leadership is investigating ways to introduce this good practice school wide.

Cobble Hill has a wide and engaging curriculum and students have many opportunities to obtain credits in a good variety of subjects, including law. Poor facilities for physical education, however, hamper students' chances of obtaining credit in this subject. Through his strong vision for success, the principal very effectively engages all of the community in each stage of the school improvement cycle and development of school wide goals for the Comprehensive Educational Plan. Many new initiatives have been put in place this year, for example student short- term goal setting. The leadership team recognizes the need for rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the impact of these initiatives to ensure that the school is on track to achieve its goal of a 60% plus graduation rate in this academic year.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school very effectively collects and analyzes a wide range of data to gain a clear picture of individual student strengths and areas of need.
- School leaders successfully involve the whole school community, including students, in the development of the Comprehensive Educational Plan and in each stage of school improvement.
- The school is a positive, respectful learning community with high expectations of student success, and, as result, students are engaged in their learning and want to do well.
- The school effectively encourages active teacher participation in the inquiry team process to improve students' learning outcomes.
- The principal's strong, motivational vision for the school's development is understood and shared by all members of the school community.
- The school successfully uses a wide range of academic support programs, focusing on ensuring students maintain progress towards achieving their goals.

What the school needs to improve

- Further develop systems to identify and address the needs of ethnic and gender subgroups and the highest achieving students in each grade and subject.
- Based on the findings of the inquiry team, develop a school wide student-mentoring (advisory) program to fully support students' personal and academic needs.
- Extend and improve the facilities and programs available for physical education to enable students to successfully obtain credits in this required subject.
- Involve the school community in rigorously evaluating the effectiveness of new initiatives and organizational changes in order to refine and modify where necessary.

Part 3: Main Findings

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school collects and uses a wide range of data to understand the needs of individual students and groups. In addition to using historical data obtained from students' previous schools, the school uses additional assessments for all students at the beginning of the academic year. The data specialist shares this information with staff in a clear, visual way. The school also very effectively uses data from all core subjects to assess students' progress and to monitor student outcomes and needs. As a result, it quickly identifies the strengths and needs of students and wastes no time in ensuring programs are in place to support individual needs.

The school leadership has effectively identified the needs of some of its subgroups. It works hard to ensure that the high population of students with special educational needs is included in all school activities. The special education teacher has been very effective in ensuring that these students have comprehensive transitional and vocational plans in preparation for when they leave school. As result, students with special educational needs are well prepared for life after school. For example, a former student said how much the school had helped him in finding meaningful employment. The school's English as a second language teacher ensures that the small group of English language learners is equally well supported. The school is currently developing systems to further disaggregate data in order to monitor the progress and performance of gender and ethnic groups across all subjects.

The inquiry team has been very proactive in ensuring that its target population of low achievers makes good gains in math, and is currently developing strategies to increase this process school wide, including more students in the intensive action research. For example, the physical education department are focusing on and supporting students who fail to obtain credits in this subject.

The school has established good communication links with parents and is continually encouraging active involvement in their children's education. Although there is not as much involvement as the school would wish, it is steadily improving. An effective focus on improving attendance has had already had positive results. Parents are supportive of the school and take advantage of the many opportunities that the school offers. This includes being able to access information about their children's progress online

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 school leadership team has very effectively evaluated the previous Comprehensive Educational Plan and has planned for the next cycle of school improvement. This process involves the whole school community and is based on a thorough analysis of

data and prioritizing actions for improvement. The main priority is to increase graduation rates. All department and student goals are targeted around this. The school sets measurable goals in all core subjects for all grades and departments. The leadership team monitors and revises these at the end of each marking period. Students are able to articulate their long-term goals and what they need to do to achieve them. Recently they have been involved in writing their own short-term goals. As a result, they have a clear idea of what they have to do to achieve graduation. Students say that these short-term goals have already helped them focus more clearly on improving their work. However, it is too soon to evaluate the full impact of this on the school's longer-term goals.

School leaders meet regularly in each marking period to review progress towards meeting school and department goals and to refine goals where necessary. Students regularly confer with departmental staff regarding their progress in achieving long-term and short-term goals. Students identified at risk are referred for one of many available intervention programs. For example, students have access to credit recovery programs or guidance counseling. Parents are able to track student progress through an online program or conventional report cards. As a result, there is a clear understanding of goals and progress towards achieving them. Students and their families value the high expectations that the school has for their success. As one parent said, "Kids here are given every opportunity to be successful; no one should fall through the cracks!"

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students' learning goals.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school provides a challenging and engaging curriculum in all core subjects in addition to some good extra-curricular activities. There is flexibility in the programs that meets the needs of all learners. For example, a newly introduced law program challenges and extends the thinking of grade 9 students. Plans are already in place to offer a wider range of programs in the arts when a state of the art refurbished auditorium opens next early next year. However, space and facilities for physical education are severely limited. As a result, students do not always gain the credits needed to graduate in this subject. The school leadership has good plans to improve these facilities but they are hampered by external constraints beyond their control. Teachers and students use technology very well throughout the school to enhance teaching and learning. In particular, the use of interactive whiteboards in all classes successfully engages students in their learning.

Effective assessment systems enable teachers to differentiate their instruction and plan to meet each student's need. Where teachers' high levels of confidence are more apparent, they plan engaging lessons around a workshop model that supports students well in meeting their needs and encouraging independent learning. However, this is not always consistent. As a result, some students are not fully engaged or as actively involved in their learning. The school leadership recognizes this and works hard to ensure that teachers apply good practice in all subjects. Staff developers model instruction and support lesson planning, in addition to providing professional development.

The principal and his team have successfully created a positive learning environment where respect and tolerance are highly valued. As result, students want to succeed and do their best and members of staff are enthusiastic in their work. The school very

effectively uses a range of strategies to ensure the school is a safe well-ordered place and incidents of unsociable behavior are quickly dealt with. For example, a group of grade 12 students held an assembly for the lower grades, stressing the importance of positive attitudes towards school. School leaders have noticed the impact of this in the improved attitude and behavior of grade 9 students.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

School leaders have effectively established individual professional development plans for teachers and set goals to improve their practice. The assistant principals, staff developers and other professionals provide effective support for teachers where needed. Common prep times, grade and subject meetings are scheduled regularly to facilitate discussions on effective practice, reviews of student work and data, and to share lesson plans. Professional development, including faculty and departmental conferences in addition to external courses, focuses on school priorities for improvement, as well as targeting individual needs and goals. Many opportunities are therefore available for teachers to work together to share good practice. As a result, the staff is an increasingly collegiate team that continues to look for ways to better their practice and improve outcomes for students.

The inquiry team has effectively encouraged teacher participation in collaborative groups to examine student data in depth. Because of this, the school has set up several different teams to examine student data in other departments. For example, the physical education teachers are currently focusing on students in the lowest third who fail to obtain credits in this subject. The strategy from the initial inquiry team that had the biggest impact on students' progress was the individual mentoring that the target group received from assigned school staff. Although the school has a very effective guidance plan in place to support the well-being and emotional needs of students, inquiry team members found that students responded very well when relating to one adult who had a clear picture of all their needs. The school leadership recognizes that this is a powerful piece of research and is looking at ways of introducing a school-wide mentoring program into its culture.

The school works in partnership with students and their families to ensure that a wide range of internal and external services are available to enhance student personal and academic growth. For example, a leadership program encourages students to share their talents in the community. One student was exhibiting his artwork in the canteen at the time of the review and other students were able to talk to him about it. The school hopes that opportunities such as this will allow more students to be recognized for their unique qualities.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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.

Teachers use a wide range of assessment material to regularly monitor student progress through the year in all core subjects. Students who do not make progress, or who are identified at risk, are quickly placed in intervention programs that provide catch-up and credit recovery, such as extended-day programs or the Saturday academy. Teachers

also provide informal opportunities and tutorials to support student learning. As a result, the school ensures that all students have many opportunities to succeed in reaching their goals and, in some cases, make accelerated progress.

The school administration has been very thorough in using the Progress Report, Quality Review and other relevant information in evaluating the effectiveness of its work and modifying systems and programs as required. This demonstrates that self-reflection and evaluation is part of school culture. As a result, the school is constantly looking for ways to improve practice. The school has introduced several new initiatives this year in response to the last Quality Review, including student goal setting and the new law program. The school recognizes that these and other organizational changes need to be rigorously monitored, evaluated and then refined in order to ensure their effectiveness.

The newly drafted Comprehensive Educational Plan clearly prioritizes areas for improvement. Much of this is due to the clear focus and leadership of the principal and his team, who have had a very positive impact on improving instruction and the tone of the school, leading to improved student performance and progress. Parents, students and staff praise the clear vision for the school's continued development. Because of this, the whole school community shares an understanding of the improvements required to ensure high graduation rates and the continued success of the school.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: The Cobble Hill High School of American Studies	△	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?				X
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?			X	
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?			X	
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?			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 student’s learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?			X	
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?				X
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?			X	
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYQ, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

To what extent do ...	Δ	➤	✓	+
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?			X	
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?			X	
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?			X	
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				
X				

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent do school leaders...	Δ	➤	✓	+
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?			X	
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?				X
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?			X	
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4				
X				

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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 and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?			X	
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?			X	
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?			X	
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				
X				

Quality Review Scoring Key							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed