



**Department of  
Education**

*Joel I. Klein, Chancellor*

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

# **Quality Review Report 2008-2009**

**DeWitt Clinton High School**

**High School 440**

**100 West Mosholu Parkway South  
Bronx  
NY 10468**

**Principal: Geraldine Ambrosio**

**Dates of review: December 10 - 12, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Joy Stopher**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

DeWitt Clinton High School is a high school with 4376 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 26% Black, 65% Hispanic, 2% White, and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 21% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 79.9%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 66% eligibility.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is proficient.**

DeWitt Clinton High School has a rich history going back over a century and with many famous alumni. It has seen many changes not only in the education system but also in the nature of the diverse community it serves. What has not changed is the high expectation the school and its community have for students to grow academically and personally and gain a college place. Goal setting to achieve these broader aims is part of the culture of the school but this does not yet extend to the identification of specific and measurable student goals in all subjects. Curriculum developments are underway to enable the school to do this more effectively.

In order to improve the way it meets the personal and academic needs of individual students the school has organized itself into small learning communities (SLCs) and is demonstrating success towards achieving this aim. Students and their families are appreciative of the personal support, particularly that provided by the guidance counselors. Attendance teachers within each SLC raise awareness and provide effective support but improving student attendance remains an issue. There is a significant amount of attendance data available but the school is not yet using it systematically to support an inquiry approach so it can identify where the real issues lie.

The flexible approach to programming and the organizational structures are such that students in their SLCs still have access to an extensive range of programs and activities that a large school is able to offer. The vast numbers of after school activities engage and motivate students to succeed.

The school is developing its use of data, particularly ARIS so that it can support teachers in increasing their use of data to differentiate instruction. Although the school has made progress in its use of technology to support teaching and learning there is considerable scope for development.

The principal and assistant principals form a strong and collaborative leadership team. They have successfully promoted collegiality and gained the commitment of staff. Consequently, there is a shared understanding of the changes necessary to bring about sustainable improvement and raise achievement with clear goals already in place.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school and its community have high expectations for students.
- The principal and assistant principals provide strong collaborative leadership, which has successfully promoted collegiality and gained the commitment of staff.
- The school provides an extensive range of programs and activities to engage and motivate students.
- The small learning communities are successfully promoting students' academic and personal growth enhanced by the very effective work of the guidance counselors.
- Organizational structures and the flexible approach to programming are helping the school to raise achievement.
- There is a shared understanding of the way forward and clear goals in place to bring about sustainable changes to improve teaching and learning.

### What the school needs to improve

- Support teachers in making the best use of data to differentiate instruction.
- Make use of current curriculum developments to support the identification of specific and measurable student goals in all subjects.
- Introduce an inquiry approach to improve attendance.
- Increase the use of technology to enhance teaching and learning.

## 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 analyzes a wide range of data including systemic data from tests together with data from scholarship reports, cohort, attendance, suspension, college acceptance, adequate yearly progress, progress reports and review outcomes to identify trends. Analysis has resulted in a greater emphasis on credit accumulation following recognition that students do well at the higher end but not as well at the lower.

The data inquiry team has been active in analyzing the performance of subgroups, particularly English language learners in math. The school was surprised to find that the underachievement resulted from poor arithmetic skills rather than language deficiencies giving an obvious focus to future instruction. Collaboration and discussions resulted in an organizational change to the way in which the school groups the English as a second language population. They are now in classes such as advanced, intermediate and beginner to target their needs more effectively. Similarly, analysis into the progress of ninth grade boys in English language arts has led to the setting up of an all boys teaching group.

The success of this inquiry approach has spurred staff on to want to build a culture that values data in all aspects of the work of the school. There is a significant amount of attendance data available, for example, but the school is not yet using it systematically and in sufficient depth to identify and target the underlying issues to bring about the necessary improvement in student attendance.

School leaders see the relatively recent introduction of ARIS as an important stage in helping staff to use data to monitor their students' progress and help them differentiate instruction. This is a work in progress as teachers are not able to do this to the same effect in all subject areas. A school designed assessment tool for itemized analysis is helping to reinforce differentiation in the RAMP-UP program. School leaders are hoping to generate data more quickly to support teachers and develop their competence and confidence in using on-line technology.

The school shares data with parents through regular meetings and events and staff make regular phone calls home sharing good news as well as areas for improvement. Guidance counselors are particularly effective in ensuring students and their parents have sufficient information. Parents expressed an enthusiasm and interest in being able to track their child's progress using ARIS. Some feel that parents who find it difficult to go to meetings may benefit from the use of on-line technology.

**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 and its community have high expectations for students. They hope students will grow academically and personally, so they can gain a college place and fulfill their role in society. The setting of goals is part of the culture the school has created to achieve this. Leaders have encouraged teachers in the use of SMART (specific, measurable, action-orientated, realistic, and timely) goals by providing them with professional development. Teachers review academic and personal goals with students each marking period and the advisory program engages students in goal setting. They also communicate student goals to parents. This focus is very effective in supporting students to achieve longer term and medium term goals such as “improving my scores in math”. However, it does not yet extend to the identification of specific and measurable goals with clear next learning steps in all subjects. There are a small number of good examples to build upon such as that cited by a senior who knew that she needed to “better understand graphing in functions and derivatives”.

Strong collaboration and leadership have ensured that the whole school goals in the Comprehensive Educational Plan accurately reflect the areas for further development to bring about sustainable changes in teaching and learning. The SLCs are developing well, have created their own specific goals, and are making increasingly effective use of data. Because the assistant principals lead each SLC, the cabinet is well able to evaluate the school’s overall success towards achieving its goals. Moreover, the highly collaborative working practices mean that it is able to put strategic action plans in place at any time of the year they are relevant. Teachers, parents and students all take part in the school improvement planning cycle through the school leadership team.

**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 SLCs with their focus on career-based environments are making a positive contribution to students’ academic and personal growth. Students value them not only for the closer relationships they are able to develop with their teachers and counselors but because it gives them an opportunity to be with peers who share their interests. SLC specialisms include ninth grade academy, business enterprise, future educators, health careers, Macy and Macy Einstein, public service and veterinary professions. What is particularly effective is the flexibility of the programming to support the needs of individual students in this large school. Even though a student is “signed up” to a particular SLC, they are still able to access classes and electives not available within their own base. Some classes have students from several SLCs. In addition, students have access to a vast range of after-school activities, which really engage and motivate them because of the links with sports team eligibility and academic success, for example. Special activities such as the “Gentlemen’s Club” and “The Divas” are designed to develop students’ personal growth and build their capacity to achieve their wider goals.

The school makes good use of its budget to meet the needs of students. It has taken positive steps to increase the amount of technology available to support teaching and learning but there is some way to go in both providing resources and making sure staff are able to utilize them to best effect.

The school has placed a strong emphasis on the development of literacy and writing across the curriculum and has been successful in raising the importance of differentiation in this respect. Many lessons have an appropriate focus on the development of vocabulary supported by word walls and the use of rubrics. There are examples of effective lesson planning with clear learning objectives and differentiated activities but this is inconsistent. Some teachers continue to over-direct lessons giving students too few opportunities to take part in collaborative and group work, hands-on activities and independent learning. Nonetheless, the SLC directors have a very good knowledge of the best practices in their own areas. They are exploring ways to share the best instructional practices within SLCs and across the school.

**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.**

The school recognizes that the SLCs are at different stages in the sharing of best practice but all staff members acknowledge that the common planning time and weekly meetings are having a positive impact in this respect. There is a strong sense of collegiality amongst staff, which derives from the supportive leadership and instructional involvement of the cabinet. This is enabling the staff within each SLC to share ideas and strategies, plan together and look at student work and data. Because each SLC has its own guidance counselor and attendance teacher, staff are able to monitor the progress of students across subjects and discuss personal issues, which may affect performance. Students and their families hold the work of the guidance counselors in high regard.

Despite the limitations on the time available for staff development teachers report a good range of opportunities to attend conferences as well as the benefits of the teacher centre based at the school. SLC directors, assistant principals and teachers have been involved in curriculum developments using backward mapping and this is beginning to support the school in achieving its goal to promote greater differentiation and student engagement.

The cabinet link teachers' goals to the Comprehensive Educational Plan and student achievement but these do not yet fully align with individual observations and professional development in a formalized way. However, they carry out frequent formal and informal observations and provide constructive feedback for staff using the Santa Cruz model. What makes this especially effective is the pairing of members of the cabinet. Some assistant principals have a role both as an SLC director and as a content assistant principal. So for example, the SLC director would observe a global studies lesson in her ninth grade academy alongside the assistant principal responsible for social studies throughout the school.

The school has a very strong alumni and an extensive range of partnerships, which support the academic and personal growth of students. This includes partnerships with colleges, business links to support the SLC themes, leadership programs, fifteen advanced placement programs and extensive sports and music activities. The LYFE

program is successfully providing on-site care for the infants of young parents studying at the school.

**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.**

The high level of collaboration underpins the school's strategies for monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of decisions and the implementation of plans. School leaders examine data weekly, monthly and by marking period depending upon the context. The interaction between SLC directors, content assistant principals, counselors and administration generally, results in a well-informed school leadership who know what is working and what is not. Moreover, the monitoring and revision leads to the adjustment of strategies in a creative and flexible way, particularly with regard to programming. The findings of the data inquiry team led to programming changes into groups for English as a second language and the school amended its scheduling to introduce some double classes for English language learners to give greater flexibility in instructional delivery.

Over recent years, the school has had to respond to a changing student population with higher numbers of English language learners and special education students than ever before. Additionally, not all students have shown the same levels of engagement as previously and attendance is not as high as the school would like it to be. School leaders have been highly successful in developing a culture of openness and engaging staff in collaborative decision-making so that the school can move forward and make sustainable changes to meet the needs of all its students. As one teacher commented, "We are committed to a mission". There is indeed a shared vision and understanding of the changes necessary. There are clear goals in place to raise achievement and a commitment to consolidating improvements to teaching and learning. The principal and assistant principals provide strong and informed leadership and demonstrate tenacity and creativity in moving the school closer towards achieving its goals to accelerate student learning at all levels.

## School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

|  |   |   |          |          |
|--|---|---|----------|----------|
| <b>School name: DeWitt Clinton High School</b>   | △ | ➤ | ✓        | +        |
| <b>Overall QR Score</b>  |   |   | <b>X</b> |          |
| <b>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.</b>      |   |   |          |          |
| <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?  |   |   | <b>X</b> |          |
| 1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?   |   |   | <b>X</b> |          |
| 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?  |   |   | <b>X</b> |          |
| 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? |   |   | <b>X</b> |          |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>   |   |   | <b>X</b> |          |
| <b>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.</b>  |   |   |          |          |
| <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?             |   |   | <b>X</b> |          |
| 2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?  |   |   |          | <b>X</b> |
| 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?  |   |   | <b>X</b> |          |
| 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?   |   |   | <b>X</b> |          |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>   |   |   | <b>X</b> |          |

### 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.

| <b>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.</b>   |                |   |   |   |            |   |                |
|--|----------------|---|---|---|------------|---|----------------|
| <i>To what extent do ...</i>   | △              | ▷ | ✓                                       | + |            |   |                |
| 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                                       |   |            |   |                |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>   |                |   | X                                       |   |            |   |                |
| <b>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.</b>   |                |   |   |   |            |   |                |
| <i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>   | △              | ▷ | ✓                                       | + |            |   |                |
| 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                                       |   |            |   |                |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>   |                |   | X                                       |   |            |   |                |
| <b>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.</b>  |                |   |   |   |            |   |                |
| <i>To what extent do...</i>  | △              | ▷ | ✓                                       | + |            |   |                |
| 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                                       |   |            |   |                |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>   |                |   | X                                       |   |            |   |                |
| <b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>  |                |   |   |   |            |   |                |
| △  | Underdeveloped | ▷ | Underdeveloped with Proficient Features | ✓ | Proficient | + | Well Developed |