

# **Quality Review Report 2008-2009**

**Beach Channel High School**

**High School 410**

**100-00 Beach Channel Drive**

**Queens**

**NY 11694**

**Principal: David Morris**

**Dates of review: November 24 - 26, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Richard Woolf**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Beach Channel is a high school with 1584 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 52% Black, 33% Hispanic, 9% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 59% of the students enrolled and girls account for 41%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 75.0%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 66% eligibility. The school shares its building with two other schools.

### Overall Evaluation

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

Beach Channel is a large comprehensive high school that through the leadership, vision and resource management skills of its principal is starting to emerge from a period of academic poverty. The road has been long and challenging but one, which the entire staff appreciates, is beginning to reap the rewards for their endeavors and sustainability. Students respond by attending more regularly, participating more fully in the life of the school and leaving many of their personal issues at the gates of the building.

Much of this transition is due to the formation of a number of small learning communities within the large school. Each of the communities has a specific academic theme, for example, Renaissance covers the arts. There are three other communities with a further two due to commence next year. Students opt to choose for whichever theme suits their learning preference or style. The students then stay within that community and with the teachers assigned to cover the core curriculum and specialist areas for their time in school. Since their inception three years ago the positive impact is striking. Not only have the academics of individual students risen but also the effect throughout the whole school is evident for all to see. There is no doubt this one inspirational move is improving the quality of student learning. An assistant principal oversees each small community and this is a good example of distributive leadership. Another positive effect of this manifests itself in the continuing good use of data to demonstrate progress as well as promote a healthy rivalry between the four communities. Additionally the school's professional development program is helping teachers acquire new skills to meet the challenges of moving the school further forward. The support of outside organizations plays a significant part in this movement of overall school improvement.

The school acknowledges there is much more to accomplish and this shows itself in the lack of consistency in the delivery of differentiated instruction. Similarly, there are opportunities to strengthen the action planning and monitoring systems across the school. The school does not reach out to parents with the same rigor as other aspects of its work, especially by engaging them more in the learning process of their children. The school improves daily and is a positive place for young people to learn. A strong challenge for the school remains in how to reflect that positivity in the increasingly important Learning Environment Survey, where an extra eight points over two years and the school's progress report would show significantly different outcomes.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal's strong and purposeful leadership is challenging the school community to raise its aspirations by ensuring everyone has an opportunity to succeed.
- Establishing the school's small learning communities is a major factor in raising attendance and in the development of a safe and secure environment for learning.
- The school's ability to collect and analyze data at an individual student and cohort level across all subject areas is a strong feature of its work.
- The school has made significant curriculum changes resulting from the positive lesson observations undertaken by the administration to meet student needs.
- The school's use of a diminishing array of resources does not affect student learning and the use of external organizations is a strength.
- The school has a very good system of identifying teachers' professional development needs that continues to assist teachers in promoting student learning.

### What the school needs to improve

- Develop action plans that stem from the school-wide goals to ensure more rigorous monitoring can take place at regular intervals during the year.
- Ensure completion of the next Learning Environment Survey better reflects the growing positivity of the school.
- Refine instructional practices so that lessons are rigorous, differentiated more consistently and meet the needs of all students, especially the higher achievers.
- Engage parents more fully in the school but in particular in the learning process of their children.

## 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 well developed.**

This school collects and analyzes data from a wide-ranging array of sources that covers the core curriculum and a great deal more. This allows the administration to have a very effective overview of both individual and cohort student-related data to improve learning. Already the school has comparative data on each of its graduating classes for the next four years. Its use on tracking cohort strengths and weaknesses accounts for significant changes taking place in the school. A good example is the improving rates of attendance. By analyzing attendance patterns over time, the school found there is a need to increase staff working more directly with families. Currently, attendance is increasing significantly in comparison to previous years. This increase is due to the intimate knowledge staff have of students within the small learning communities. In terms of instruction, teachers have a plethora of data that services their requirements in ascertaining the academic backgrounds of students. This is invaluable as they tackle successfully the issues of raising student-learning levels, which is statistically at a very low academic level on entry.

The school has a large number of special education students and English language learners. In both groups, the data shows students achieve well in comparison to the general education population. The school does very well in the identification of the specific learning needs of its ethnic and gender groups and as a result, the school is meeting more of its adequate yearly progress targets. Another interest group the school tracks closely is the large number of students who arrive at the school over age for their grade level. This group proves a challenge, but one which the school is analyzing and evaluating and as a result the data reveals many of this group are progressing. The school shares data with parents on a regular basis but this is an aspect of the school's work, which is a challenge. The school does not have in place systems for the better sharing of data to a wider base of parents that allows them to have a proactive role in the learning of their children.

**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.**

There are clear guidelines for staff as to the expectations for raising student achievement. This includes the regular setting of tests to demonstrate progress within each marking period. Initially teachers collect baseline data and conference with students to set personal goals as well as subject-based ones. All teachers have whole-school goals relating to the teaching of literacy and numeracy. This initiative is

beginning to impact positively upon student learning and improving scholarship reports demonstrates this. The school is most reflective in determining the outcomes of its whole-school goals. This is one reason for steady but sustained progress over the last three years. The school's leadership team has representation from staff, parents and students. The group analyzes previous goals before setting new ones. The basis of this comes from data and all new goals have measurable outcomes that are realistic but challenging.

The principal charges each assistant principal who has responsibility for small learning communities to work with teachers in raising their students' academic profile. This is challenging but through perseverance is now beginning to show reward with an increase in the number of students improving their Regents grades and credits for graduation. One student said, "In the past, many students saw graduation and entering college as something other people did but that is now changing. We know what we are aiming for and how to get there. More teachers are making sure of that." The work of the inquiry team is also rising to the challenge. They have a clear understanding of the target groups and their formation comes from the data and deficiencies in the school progress report. The close monitoring of the target groups' students already reveals improving scholarship which is in alignment with their goals and targets. Teachers are aware of the team's work and through regular newsletters have an in depth understanding of the part they play in academically progressing these students. Despite far better communication through regular newsletters, direct mail and personal phone calls, engaging more parents in their children's education remains an issue. This is particularly so for the setting of goals and helping their children in their involvement in the next-step learning activities. Over the last few years, the school has become a safer and more secure place in which to work. Coupled with increasingly higher academic expectations, more students are attending on a regular basis with the subsequent outcomes of higher than ever graduation rates. Parents acknowledge this as being very positive for not only the school but also the wider community.

**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 follows the mandated curriculum but when data demonstrates the need to make changes alterations do occur. For example, in a number of subjects, passing rates were too low and did not correspond with the capability of some students. The school's response was to change courses, traditionally set for two years, and make them one-year intensive with double the teaching time allocation. The outcome was increasing pass rates with higher levels of achievement. The greater number of lessons observations undertaken by the administration over the last eight months also serves to support how this change in the curriculum offered is improving student learning and understanding.

An area of work where the school still is not yet forging ahead with real significance is that of differentiated instruction. Many teachers understand the concept of differentiation but there is a lack of consistency in terms of its application in the classroom so that not all students, particularly the higher performers, receive the challenge that is commensurate with their individual needs. There is whole class instruction for too much of the lesson and group work is not evident in many subject areas. The school does not

use the strength of the small learning communities to grow this aspect of the teachers' work and so develop a more consistent approach.

The school appears on the surface to have adequate resources although there is a lack of technology within individual classrooms. The reason for the effective resource management is the principal's outstandingly high level of skill in this area. Working from the principle that student-learning is a priority it is noticeable that the negative impact of losing over 30 staff in the last year is not interrupting lessons. It is fair to acknowledge the staffing of the small learning communities has withstood the worst of the changes but again this is less than anticipated as the assistant principals now teach more classes. The results of the school's Learning Environment Survey were very disappointing. The administration's analysis is revealing and is prompting specific and direct actions. The parents' monthly newsletter explains how the changes taking place in the school are positive. Teachers now feel more settled than in previous years and with a greater sense of collegiality in their work. All of this, and higher student attendance in a safe environment, are contributing to a spirit of togetherness and a new positivity about the school. The school believes this feel good factor is here to stay and is the basis upon which to construct its future development.

**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 has a strong policy of lesson observations that is influential in determining a number of aspects of their work. The administration clearly sees this as being an invaluable tool in understanding the workings of the school. Despite teacher reluctance to participate in the increasing number of informal observations there is a growing feeling that the feedback provides staff with positive professional development programs. Each member of staff has their own individual plan, which aligns to their personal needs. The school makes very good use of the in-house teacher center. The staff member responsible for running the center has an excellent working relationship with teachers and works with them on a one-to-one basis to improve instruction. The principal is adamant all teachers receive appropriate professional help. As a result of this, the school is making progress and teachers are improving their practice.

Teachers work collaboratively and there are opportunities for them to meet as members of small learning community groups or subject teams. This is most beneficial in assisting teachers to identify and act upon individual student need. Teachers plan together and share data. There is a high level of support for newer teachers to the school. This includes close monitoring from a mentor as well as the support of a buddy teacher. Staff in the school are working with an increasing sense of camaraderie that is helping to improve all-round relationships and student outcomes. In addition, the school receives exceptionally focused support from a number of outside organizations, with many having a strong local involvement in the community. Additionally they provide programs to support the social, emotional and academic needs of the students. Many of the programs take place as extra-curricular activities. The school has very close links with colleges and this helps to broaden the horizons of the students and achieve one of the school's goals that higher numbers of students graduate to the college of their choice.

**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 school has effective systems in place for the analysis of individual student and cohort data that takes place at least every ten days. This follows numerous tests taken by students to monitor their progress. All this feeds into building up a data profile for inclusion in the student's report card. This process of assessment occurs in all core subjects. However, teachers do not always translate this data collection into the monitoring of next-steps learning for students or the amendment of targets and goals with sufficient rigor. This is a new venture to improve overall student grades and still requires time to embed. The administration has a greater understanding of how monitoring progress at different grade levels and across subjects is proving a valuable tool in moving the school forward.

The school is now in a position to extend this provision through the development of its action-planning procedures. The principal acknowledges this an area for development. The school has its Comprehensive Educational Plan goals and from them the school has the chance to produce action plans that clearly show interim checkpoints and monitoring procedures to validate progress and adjust goals accordingly. Such action planning may assist the leaders of the small learning communities to monitor their work and those of individual teachers more rigorously. In alignment with the school's ability to collect and analyze data, it uses a number of external verifications to validate its overall effectiveness. These include previous Quality Reviews where areas for improvement continue to challenge the faculty.

The principal has a transparent vision for this school. It permeates through everything he and the teachers are attempting to achieve with the students. Students at this school have the opportunity to go to college and become successful in life through better and more challenging teaching and high rates of attendance in a safe environment. Parents confirm that this approach is having a significant and positive impact on the life opportunities of their children.

# School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

<b>School name: Beach Channel High School</b>	Δ	➤	✓	+
<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>	Δ	➤	✓	+
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>	Δ	➤	✓	+
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, DYO, 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