

Quality Review Report

2009-2010

Cobble Hill High School of American Studies

High School 519

**347 Baltic Street
Brooklyn
NY 11201**

Principal: Kenneth Cuthbert

Dates of review: January 5 - 6, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Louise Kapner

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Cobble Hill High School of American Studies is a high school with 816 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 67% Black, 29% Hispanic, 2% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 78%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The principal's quiet demeanor hides his driving passion that underlies the school's focus on maximizing student achievement and creating a respectful environment with the support of the entire school community. His keen understanding of what the school needs to do to improve student outcomes is an outgrowth of an in-depth and on-going review of all data at the school, subject, and grade level and for individuals and groups of students and is reflected in the overall improvement of student performance from the previous year. This review of data is used very effectively to allocate resources and set measurable interim and long-term goals. Revisions to practice are made to optimize learning. This focus on the use of data is a highly successful practice of the members of the guidance department, but their information is not yet disseminated school-wide. They are exploring ways in which to use the school's inquiry space to post the information. Good data review is expanding to the classroom level with the aim of providing suitable instruction to meet students' needs. Teachers' planning reflects good insights of students' learning requirements and a passion for their craft and for their students. However, the use of differentiation of instruction is not yet consistently evident.

Teachers bring the practice of reviewing student work to their weekly common preparation time during which they effectively plan and share best practices. Staff value the support of colleagues; conversations are ongoing, and as the teachers of living-environments said, they "even text each other" with questions and ideas. The foci of professional development evolve from very good conversations, analyzing data, and the understanding of the need to further enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers have ample opportunities for on- and off-site intervisitations and participate in relevant activities to enhance their skills. However, currently, the school is in transition in selecting an observational tool that provides for effective conversations around evaluating teaching practices.

Through strategic and effective partnerships, a majority of students take advantage of well-planned activities that support their academic and social emotional growth. Students appreciate the help and support they receive from their teachers and counselors. However, teachers' feedback on their work is at times confusing and not uniform throughout the school, or even within subject areas and classes which leads to students not always having clear next steps.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's passion and vision is a driving force behind well thought-out decisions around school organization and the use of resources to meet the diverse learning and social and emotional needs of the students.
 - The principal's vision of creating a "college going culture" influences the school's use of resources. Students in grade 9 and 10 participate in the 'Advancement Via Individual Determination' (AVID) college preparatory program to support success in college. Teachers effectively teach study habits, note taking, time management, and use skillful questioning to develop independent learners. These inputs have contributed to 24 out of 26 of last year's cohort of freshmen attaining sophomore status.
 - School scheduling is reflective of the learning needs of students. Double periods for grade 9 students in math and English language arts provide suitable time for students to acclimate to the high-school learning environment, and for teachers to adequately cover content, review work, and provide individual student support. Teachers see this practice as contributing to the success of students.
- The school community works collaboratively to establish a respectful environment and to identify and create strategic partnerships clearly focused on providing students with very effective supports to improve learning.
 - In response to the prior year's Learning Environment Survey the school's use of scanning is preventing students from bringing in disruptive and dangerous items. This has resulted in a dramatic reduction in the number of serious incidents. The law-program teacher is now establishing a student court to "give ownership to students" around their behavior, to help them see how "individual actions affect the whole group." Parents are partners in this effort and sensitivity training for staff, students, and parents are planned.
 - An extensive after-school program, offered by The Leadership Program, run by a dedicated director and funded through a 21st Century grant, provides students with opportunities to enrich their personal lives and receive additional academic support. A College Summit program identifies junior-year students to become senior-year peer leaders. Last year, these students achieved the greatest number of applications and acceptances to college the school has ever had.
- Administrators' review of student data is highly supportive in identifying and selecting well-varied professional development opportunities, on- and off-site, enabling staff to learn and share best practices to support student learning.
 - All staff members participate in Monday afternoon teacher-team planning. High-standard conversations center around student work, results on common assessments and effective teaching strategies to support student learning. Teachers of grade 9 algebra used the results on the most recent uniform formative assessment effectively to highlight class-level and individual student results. Excellent conversation

focused on successes and those areas that needed additional work. Teachers freely shared instructional practices to provide colleagues with key strategies when revisiting the topic.

- Global-studies teachers visited Transit Tech High School, a similar school relative to demographics and student achievement, to enhance their own teaching practices. As a result, teachers' lessons are beginning to include best practices to support a higher level of student engagement and learning. Teachers are highly appreciative and take advantage of well-selected on- and off-site professional development to hone their skills. The special education coordinator's implementation of a new transition-plan protocol is recognized by the State as exemplary.
- The review of a wide range of all data provides the principal and staff members with key information relative to school, class, and student performance, that is used well to assess needs and inform instruction.
 - The principal regularly reviews students' Regents results and credit accumulation. As a result, the school provides suitable programming including slower-paced courses, after-school courses to accumulate missed credits, and preparation courses. Teachers' item analyses of results are used to "back-map" to know where students need to go and to influence instructional practices.
 - Using an ORID (objective, reflective, interpretive, decisional) protocol, teachers carefully examine classroom-level data, make connections to students' needs, and plan next steps. A review of results from the "I Like Your Style" inventory helps to identify individual learning styles and is used to inform class, group and individual instruction.
- The school reviews, analyzes and effectively uses a broad spectrum of data to set school, class, student, and student sub-group interim- and long-term goals aimed at raising student achievement.
 - School-wide and cohort goals are an outgrowth of an effective review of a wide range of information. A thoughtful Comprehensive Educational Plan includes goals with the "most leverage" to improve instruction, and expand the use of data to understand and address student needs, resulting in improved student outcomes. The school is highly focused on increasing the number of students earning 10+ credits in the third year.
 - The school recognizes the need to support its relatively large special education student population. A student-specific portfolio, including a learning profile, interest inventory and relevant test data, is used effectively to generate a transitional plan and individual goals to ensure meeting present and future student needs.
- Administrators and teachers regularly review and evaluate information culled from school-wide and classroom assessments to monitor student performance and progress.
 - Each marking period the principal reviews detailed reports of the percentage of students passing each subject. Comparisons of the scholarship reports during the first semester showed a greater

percentage of students passing. The principal uses this information effectively to identify struggling classes and students, as well as successful practices.

- English language arts, math and science teachers effectively use prior Regents and State rubrics to design suitable assignments and well-matched assessments to monitor and evaluate student performance toward earning Regents credit.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase teachers' use of differentiated activities, instructional strategies, and suitable materials to engage all students in learning.
 - Staff speak passionately about teaching and a desire for their students to achieve. Standard-based lessons reflect good planning with an eye to engaging students. Students in the 'Participation in Government' class were involved with computer-based research, and honors English grade 9 students were using *Raisin in the Sun* to learn about literary elements. However, the use of the same text or activity for all students, and whole-class instruction, reflects that sufficient differentiation of materials or instructional strategies is not yet evident.
- Expand the use of the guidance department's data-tracking tool so all staff are able to monitor student subgroup performance and progress.
 - School administrators and teachers track student progress. The counselor department has developed comprehensive spreadsheets to review and evaluate cohort and individual student Regents results and credit accumulation. This tool, along with student-specific intervention tracking sheets, informs counselor planning and instruction; but data is not yet accessible to all staff and therefore they do not have a broad view of the performance and progress of student subgroups.
- Convey clearer expectations and meaningful feedback to students to motivate them and provide them with next steps to improve learning.
 - Many classroom teachers use 'Anticipation Guides' and instructional rubrics to guide student learning. However, this practice does not always provide high or clear enough expectations.
 - Student grading includes levels, percentages, check marks or words such as 'good'. One student admitted to be confused, and another said his grade was "higher than expected."
- Review and refine formal and informal teacher observation tools to help monitor and promote good teaching practices.
 - The principal recognizes the value of an observational tool to guide conversation, engage teachers in "self-reflection", and to help identify staff needs. A new format for this year has not yet been developed.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: Cobble Hill School of American Studies	△	▶	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	△	▶	✓	+
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			X	
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?			X	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?				X
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X	
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	▶	✓	+
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?				X
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?				X
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?			X	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.

<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?				X
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?			X	
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			X	
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X	

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

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?			X	
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?				X
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?				X
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals 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 progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X	
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?				X
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?			X	
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X	

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