

# Quality Review Report 2009-2010

**John Bowne High School**

**High School 425  
63-25 Main Street  
Queens  
NY 11367**

**Principal: Howard Kwait**

**Dates of review: April 28 - 30, 2010  
Lead Reviewer: Richard D. D'Auria**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

John Bowne High School is a high school with 3,160 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 22% Black, 43% Hispanic, 5% White and 29% Asian students. The student body includes 25% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 79.4%.

### Overall Evaluation

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

Leadership is building a shared and coherent vision with the faculty and staff for the development of the school, now and in the future. The school offers a broad, enriched curriculum, providing unique opportunities such as science-math research, agriculture, creative writing, and student leadership, enabling students to pursue a wide array of interests. Multiple partners support the school's rich and diverse instructional program. Students celebrate and take pride in the school's cultural diversity, where they feel well supported and safe. Parents appreciate high levels of reciprocal communication with administration and faculty, augmented by effective data management and phone messaging systems. Administration and teachers are readily accessible and parents can share concerns and have meaningful input through the school leadership team and the parent teacher association. Teachers use a wide range of data well as the basis for instructional decisions. Many teachers work on a large school-wide or smaller departmental data teams, where they collectively analyze data, effectively share strategies, collaborate, and plan together well. These teams are teacher led and provide opportunities for distributed leadership. However, teachers are not yet effectively linking the use of student assessments as a tool to help them improve their pedagogy.

The school is placing particular emphasis on literacy skills across the content areas and the differentiation of instruction, where notable progress has occurred because of extensive and effective professional development. The school's significantly large population of English language learners is a particular focus, particularly Hispanic males, with whom teachers are using strategic selections of high interest authors and short stories to increase student interest and engagement. Although teachers involve students in their own learning and often group students for various class activities, they do not routinely group students based upon specific skills, but rather by general ability levels. The flexible grouping of students based upon assessed skill proficiency to facilitate more targeted and strategic teaching and learning is not yet developed. The school does not currently have a transparent and collaborative system to facilitate the establishment and tracking of progress toward differentiated learning goals for identified students or student groups. Students more often have broad, general goals, such as studying more and doing better on tests rather than skill specific goals to hone in on specific challenges with reading comprehension, writing, or math computations. They also often do not understand systemically or cannot articulate how and when they transition from one learning goal to the next. Systems for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of school-wide instructional and organizational decisions are in place. However, systems to measure progress toward interim and long-term goals are still under development.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- School leaders and staff share a common vision supporting current progress and future school development through a collegial and collaborative process.
  - The school community works collaboratively to develop focused instructional goals around literacy, differentiation, English language learners, use of data and student engagement. This is evident in conversations with all constituencies as well as embedded within the Comprehensive Educational Plan and its associated action plans.
  - Leadership places great emphasis on recruitment and hiring practices, ensuring that new teachers share a philosophy of high expectations and rigorous, data-driven instruction with the school community. These efforts, coupled with effective communication with the faculty, students, and parents, and good use of the school leadership team for decision-making, result in a broad base of support for the school now and in the future.
- The school aligns its resources well to offer a broad, engaging and rigorous, standards-based curriculum that effectively meets the varied needs and interests of a wide range of learners.
  - In addition to its Regents curriculum, the school offers a wide range of specialized programs, including a unique agriculture program that enables students to learn animal and plant sciences on a four-acre on-campus farm. Programs in science and math research, creative writing, student leadership, and a junior reserve officers training corps, as well as numerous advanced placement and elective classes like oceanography, forensic science and psychology, as well as many athletic teams offer myriad opportunities for students to explore talents and careers.
  - Teachers routinely ensure that curricula challenges and engages all learners. They utilize data as the basis for grouping students, usually by general ability level, and by designing lessons that result in high levels of student interaction and active learning.
- Students enjoy a positive and nurturing learning environment where they feel safe and well supported by a dedicated, professional, and conscientious administration, faculty, and staff.
  - Students take great pride in their school, particularly in its cultural diversity with mutual respect toward all. They appreciate the school's caring and helpful teachers and a positive learning environment where they feel safe. Students indicate that one or more staff members know them well and they are comfortable accessing emotional and academic support from teachers, guidance counselors, administration and staff.
  - Students find their work interesting and challenging, acknowledging their teachers' efforts to use Smart board and related technologies and software, and routine opportunities to work in groups, leading to active engagement in their own learning.

- Teachers analyze a wide range of data, using a variety of tools to inform their decisions and guide instructional planning and practice to maximize learning.
  - Teachers meaningfully use an array of pertinent assessments and student performance data, including ARIS, Acuity and common department assessments including mock Regents exams. Most teachers are on effective data teams, and leadership recently invested in a data management tool that enables teachers to readily access student information, generate letters to parents, and share logs of system activity with colleagues. To date, teachers logged about 1,000 calls and sent almost 6,000 letters using the system. Recent data indicates improving cohort performance in both English language arts and math.
  - School leaders and teachers thoroughly analyze student subgroup performance, with particular attention to the school's significantly large English language learner population. Strategic emphasis and monitoring of the performance of Hispanic male students is a focus. Teachers emphasize literacy skills across content areas and utilize short stories by Latin American authors to kindle greater reader interest among students.
- Parents appreciate the high level of reciprocal communication with the school, keeping them well informed and meaningfully involved in decisions.
  - Parents enjoy access to and responsiveness of administration and staff. They readily shared specific examples of reciprocal conversations with faculty about their children and note that all are highly attuned to the students, quickly noting and addressing anything that might be going on in the life of the student and offering interventions and supports.
  - Parents experience high levels of communication as a result of the school's use of its data management system, a telephone messenger system, ARIS parent link, and supporting parent workshops.
- Student learning is enhanced and enriched through multiple partnerships and integrated supports offering a wide range of opportunities and extensions that provide experiences beyond the classroom.
  - Vibrant partners support the school's rich and diverse curriculum. Doshi Diagnostic Laboratories supports the research program. SUNY Cobleskill, Cornell University, Future Farmers of America, nurseries, and the NYC Parks Department collaborate with the unique agriculture program. The Air Force sponsors a Reserve Officers' Training Corp.
  - Despite large caseloads, guidance counselors meet with every student and develop individual planning worksheets with them. The school provides a variety of early intervention programs to support the social, emotional and academic needs of students, including student ambassadors, "big-sib, little-sib", Outward Bound and similar programs.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Develop and implement transparent, collaborative systems for monitoring student progress toward achieving interim and long-term learning goals over time.

- The school monitors the progress of the general school population, but does not currently have a transparent and collaborative process to systematically monitor and adjust differentiated learning goals for groups of students or targeted students. As a result, student progress toward goals is not as clear as it could be.
- Clear benchmarks over time for monitoring progress toward goals are not clearly established. Some students have goal folders, but teachers and departments do not consistently use them or alternate systems to monitor progress over time. As a result, students are not always clear on what specific next steps they need to take in their learning to master specific skills to achieve success in the course or a Regents examination.
- Refine the process whereby measurable and differentiated student learning goals are set to guide instruction more strategically to foster and accelerate student success.
  - The school engaged in some initial work around student goals. Some departments, most notably English language arts, exhibit more development in this area than others do. Some students articulate some general familiarity with goals, but these are often very broad such as the need to work harder, do more homework, or be on time more often.
  - The lack of consistent, skill specific differentiated learning goals limits the criteria teachers currently use to group students in class and their ability to deliver more strategic and targeted instruction for identified students.
- Provide continued opportunities for teachers to focus more closely upon assessment of student work as an instructional tool and its connection to developing good pedagogy.
  - Although most teachers meet and plan collaboratively through data teams, the link between teacher practice and student work is not currently a consistent focus. In many cases, even selected posted assignments contain very brief feedback such as “excellent” and “very good,” rather than informing students on how they can improve the quality of their work.
  - Teachers’ evaluation of student work using standards based rubrics and the degree to which teachers provide actionable feedback that can leverage changes in classroom practice is inconsistent. Although literacy in the content areas is a school wide goal, there is little evidence of student writing process in classrooms across the school.
- Build upon the progress made in differentiation by more consistently grouping students flexibly based upon their individual strengths and areas of need to support the strategic improvement of skill proficiency toward mastery.
  - Although teachers are making notable progress in differentiating lessons, the most common criteria currently used for student grouping is by general ability levels of high, medium and low. Teachers do not currently routinely group students based upon individual specific skills in need of improvement, but more often based upon broader ability groups. As a result, instruction is not as targeted and strategic as it could be.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

<b>School name: John Bowne High School</b>	△	▶	✓	+
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<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?				<b>X</b>
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?			<b>X</b>	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?				<b>X</b>
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				<b>X</b>
<b>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.</b>				
<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?				<b>X</b>
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?			<b>X</b>	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?				<b>X</b>
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?				<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>				<b>X</b>

**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>	△	➤	✓	+
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				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>	△	➤	✓	+
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>				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>	△	➤	✓	+
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>				X

**Quality Review Scoring Key**

△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed
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