

# Quality Review Report 2009-2010

**DeWitt Clinton High School**

**High School 440**

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

**Principal: Geraldine Ambrosio**

**Dates of review: June 1, 2 & 4, 2010**

**Lead Reviewer: Michael L. Schurek**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

DeWitt Clinton High School is a high school with 4444 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 28% Black, 63% Hispanic, 2% White, 6% Asian and 1% from other ethnic groups. The student body includes 19% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 79.6%.

### Overall Evaluation

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

DeWitt Clinton is a large community high school that personalizes education through numerous small learning communities that encourage experiential learning, promote career development and orient students to the rigors of college. Students describe their study as challenging, praise teachers' dedication and willingness to provide extra help and enjoy a rich school spirit through a large variety of extracurricular activities. Numerous partnerships provide extensive social-emotional support to students and their families and contribute to the school's safe, nurturing and respectful environment. Fifteen advanced placement courses, an honors program and many college affiliations establish high expectations that enable most graduates to pursue higher education.

Administrators use a wide array of data to determine student needs and adjust instruction and organization accordingly to increase student outcomes, such as their recent decision to add a Saturday tutoring program to prepare lower achieving students for upcoming Regents exams. Teachers utilize classroom assessments and ARIS to set learning goals in English language arts and math for students in need of additional support. However, they have not yet extended this practice to other subject areas, or suitably adjust goals throughout the year. Rubrics are widely used in all subjects, but are inconsistently utilized to communicate next learning steps to students to improve the quality of their work.

The principal has strategically added collaborative inquiry teams to the small learning communities to promote accountability, empower teachers to be decision-makers and establish a true learning community in alignment with school goals. These teams focus on the progress and implementation of both team and school-wide goals; however, teacher, team and school action plans do not set measurable interim benchmarks as part of their monitoring process to ensure timely revision along the way. Much work has been done to improve teachers' abilities to differentiate instruction through professional development and the use of school-wide tools and projects. However, some classes require all students to use the same reading materials and do not differentiate tasks based on students' abilities, thereby missing opportunities to modify or extend learning for lower and higher achieving students within these classes.

Parents praise the school's positive, college-oriented tone and feel listened to by staff members and administrators. They appreciate the great programs and the myriad of activities available to their children. One parent stated, "My daughter wouldn't get up to go to school until I sent her here. Now she loves school."

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal and staff work as a unified team to create a calm, respectful, and orderly environment where learning can take place and students feel supported.
  - In spite of the school's very large population, students feel much support in their academic endeavors and are well known by multiple adults in the building. Teachers, administrators and guidance counselors work through the school's small learning communities to ensure that all students can excel academically by regularly providing feedback and necessary supports to them and their families.
  - Students display a strong desire to succeed and appreciate their abilities to influence school-level decisions through suggestion boxes and student government. As a result of their input, an improved lunch menu has been established and locker room availability has been increased.
- Leaders make informed and effective organizational decisions across all aspects of the school to support improvements in learning.
  - The principal has aligned school resources to school goals by purchasing numerous site licenses and software applications for online services that enable students to recover credits and prepare for Regents exams, resulting in gradually increasing scholarship reports.
  - A federal smaller learning communities grant is used to strategically organize small learning environments within this large school that enable students to benefit from increased personalization and support while at the same time creating accountability for teaching and learning through their respective collaborative inquiry teams.
- School leaders and staff convey high expectations to students and parents thus impacting positively on student achievement.
  - High expectations, that include college attendance, are communicated during incoming student's summer orientation at Fordham University, and reinforced throughout their years at the school through small learning communities, alumni meetings, and weekend outings. In addition, numerous advanced placement courses and college partnership experiences provide guidance to students and families that enable them to successfully compete for post secondary educational placement.
  - The school regularly conducts parental surveys, resulting in recent suicide prevention workshops and financial aid seminars for families. Parent association meetings on Saturdays accommodate parents' schedules, and the provision of transportation and meals for these events supports participation. In addition, the parent coordinator trains parents during day and evening session workshops on how to maneuver through ARIS Parent Link to understand their child's progress.
- Professional collaboration is high priority and faculty profit from varied opportunities to share and develop strengths as individuals and members of the teaching community.

- All staff members participate collaboratively in teams utilizing an inquiry approach to share ideas, utilize tuning protocols, look at student work, and improve practices that focus on using literacy across curriculums. This results in uniformity of teaching strategies, establishment of instructional coherence and improvement of student outcomes.
- The school actively distributes leadership by regularly giving teachers leadership roles during small learning community and collaborative inquiry team meetings. These roles include presenting the work of their teams at national conventions every summer. This arrangement is building capacity and developing leadership skills in teachers, as well as improving instructional standards and student learning.
- The school's systems and partnerships support students and their families in continual learning and promote students' personal growth and development.
  - The school enjoys numerous partnerships with community-based organizations. Students' social-emotional well-being is well supported by self-esteem building activities and anti-bullying and gang awareness workshops. In addition, school guidance personnel provide professional development in the areas of child abuse reporting procedures, suicide prevention and bereavement. As a result, the school maintains a respectful and calm environment that regularly celebrates success.
  - The school has developed the capacity to provide child/youth services to students and families in need as evidenced by its program that provides onsite babysitting and child development activities for the children of attending students.
- Administrators and teachers use a wide range of assessment data to monitor school level needs and student progress and identify trends, plan instruction and adjust instructional practices to meet student needs.
  - Administrators and teachers analyze ARIS, Acuity, middle school data, scholarship reports, Regents' scores, and classroom assessment data in order to identify areas of need for individuals and subgroups. This practice enables teachers to select programs and materials that meet student needs, such as computer-based, individualized reading programs for English language learners and textbooks that utilize English language learner methodologies to meet subgroup needs. Teachers also utilize daily assessment activities, such as exit slips, in all subjects to monitor teaching efficacy and adjust teaching practices accordingly.
  - Teachers examine a wide range of classroom data including recently utilized learning style data to identify student strengths and weaknesses, group students and differentiate instructional strategies. Both of these areas demonstrate strong growth by this faculty regarding their abilities to use data to accelerate student outcomes since their last Quality Review.

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

- Provide consistent feedback to students and their families with detailed reasons for their success and clear next steps for improvement based on specific rubrics and exemplars to help them improve their work quality.
  - Rubrics are displayed and used in all subjects and grades, yet, these tools and genre exemplars are inconsistently utilized throughout the school to rate student projects and suggest explicit improvements necessary to raise work quality. Also the use of rubrics to reflect and self-assess the quality of their work is not an established practice for students.
- Extend the practice of using data to set measurable and differentiated learning goals to all subjects for students in need of additional support to specifically target their needs, track their progress, and raise outcomes.
  - The school administers performance assessments three times each year in English language arts and math to identify needs and set learning targets for subgroups and students in need of additional support. However, this practice does not extend to all academic subjects, thereby missing opportunities to ensure students' success by tracking interim performance and progress, making instructional adjustments, and revising goals as needed.
- Refine action planning by linking interim goals to targeted benchmarks at specific intervals to ensure that school, team, and teacher action plans can be monitored to expedite revisions and maximize impact along the way.
  - School action plans generally use percentage-based targets as the annual goal in the identified areas of improvement. Benchmarks measuring progress towards these goals at specific intervals during the school year are not indicated. Teacher team and class action plans also do not contain interim benchmarks for targeted students. The lack of these structures hampers the school's ability to determine the effectiveness of their actions along the way to allow for contingencies and make timely adjustments that improve outcomes, also limiting the school's ability to align planning from one year to the next.
- Expand differentiation practices to include instruction that varies lesson content materials and student work products based on data in order to provide challenge aligned to student achievement levels.
  - Differentiation is evident in some classrooms through groupings that provide students with more opportunities to engage in collaboration and discuss their learning. However, in other classrooms all students participate in the same activities regardless of prior learning or demonstrated competency. As a result, higher achieving students are not provided with opportunities to accelerate their learning on a consistent basis.
  - Some classrooms utilize the same materials for all students that lead to general levels of engagement for those students who are either frustrated by too high a level of difficulty or not effectively challenged by the materials used.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: DeWitt Clinton High School	△	▶	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
<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?			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	
<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?			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
<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>	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
<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>	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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X	

<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>	✓	<b>Proficient</b>	+	<b>Well Developed</b>