

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

Sheepshead Bay High School

K495

**3000 Avenue X
Brooklyn
NY 11235**

Principal: Reesa Levy

Dates of review: October 18-20, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Deena Abu-Lughod

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Sheepshead Bay High School is a high school with 2224 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 66% Black, 16% Hispanic, 8% White, and 10% Asian students. The student body includes 17% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 81.1%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The alignment of teacher observation protocols to the school's goals and teacher goals ensures that teachers' next steps and tailored supports contribute to the improvement of practice, which benefits student outcomes.
 - Faculty are committed to the school's vision of quality instruction and its expectation that their work be evaluated based on five criteria. This year, teachers used the professional teaching standards to develop their own goals and professional growth plans. The majority of teachers in several departments have already been observed using these criteria, and have welcomed and incorporated the feedback into their practice.
 - Performance evaluation is a priority. Administrators scrutinize results of common mid-terms, finals and Regents to hold teachers accountable. This has resulted in significant changes in teaching staff over the last few years. Demonstrated content knowledge and pedagogy were primary considerations in bringing in six new special education teachers, two new earth science teachers, and a reading specialist.
- The school has strong systems for aligning its resources to build coherence across the school and accelerate student learning.
 - Technology is a priority at the school, and new computer labs with trained facilitators support the expansion of online learning programs for remediation, acceleration and language acquisition. Reading lexiles of targeted subgroups increased over 200 points, which helps them keep up with content area texts.
 - Consultation with the whole school community resulted in the creation and refinement of block scheduling. This schedule allows students to work for sustained periods on school priorities, such as in-class essay writing and group projects, and on completing the embedded living environment labs which resulted in higher pass rates last year. There are daily opportunities for teacher collaboration, enhanced with a weekly after-school period, that faculty use effectively for lesson planning and inquiry, and teachers of first year students participate in a Freshman Academy, to identify and resolve common issues.
- The school closely monitors progress on its long-term plans, thoughtfully connecting organizational change to instruction, professional development and guidance which results in steady improvement of student outcomes.
 - A cohesive cabinet engages in ongoing, critical data analysis to implement and revise its action plans, which build from year to year. Having established a safe environment, the school improves attendance and academics by piloting, evaluating and consolidating worthy initiatives. For example, computer-based credit recovery options expanded and diversified. Last year, upper grade students recovered over 2500 credits and attained college credits, which contributed to the six point increase in the graduation rate and nine point increase in Regents diplomas while SAT prep programs expanded to increase college admissions rates.

- Systems for measuring progress towards interim goals allow for rapid positive adjustments. To close the English language learner opportunity gap, their teachers came under supervision of the English department, followed by the institution of a special Regents prep courses, then paired the top English and ESL teachers in a double-block of instruction and established advisories for the top nine language groups. As a result, passing rates for this subgroup in the English and US History Regents increased by 20 points, and Math by 30 points in 2010.
- School leaders make excellent use of a comprehensive range of data to identify needs and trends and plan multifaceted approaches that maximize academic growth.
 - Fine-grained analyses of behavioral and academic data underlie school decision-making. Newcomers' social-emotional needs are supported through advisories, buddies and push in teachers. When incident reports revealed these to be most frequent amongst entering freshman, guidance established proactive measures to help them adapt to the school's behavioral expectations, resulting in decreases over the course of the year and over time.
 - Screening tools ensure that students who enter below proficiency receive literacy and math skills support, enabling them to better achieve their learning goals. At the semester, the cabinet considers student work and teacher recommendations when assigning students to two- or three- term courses of study, where students are matched to teacher strengths.
- The use of common standards-based assessments and Regents item analyses enable teacher teams to refine curriculum to better address gaps and reinforce good practice.
 - Scrutiny of the content demand of social studies Regents resulted in a teacher proposal to invert the customary order and offer US history to freshman students. After a one-year drop, passing rates recovered and surpassed previous rates by 10 points, while Global History interim scholarship data also demonstrate gains.
 - Teacher teams have developed and revised common midterms, finals or projects that align well to the Regents. Teams analyze the results to identify student needs, and teachers with high pass rates host intervisitations, co-teach or mentor so that other faculty members can learn from their promising instructional practices.
- Lessons typically demonstrate teacher attention to student data and learning styles, reflecting a common commitment to the school's core beliefs about student learning and offering multiple entry points to the curriculum.
 - Most teachers are skilled at using student data, having received professional development in both item analysis and ARIS, and group students based on skills analyses, readjusting frequently in accordance with unit tests and formative data. This allows them to provide parallel texts so students can access content at their own reading level and participate actively in classroom discussions and group work, which is highly valued in the school's grading policy, and to offer options for different products, so students can build on their interests.
 - Faculty pay particular attention to designing lessons that tap into multiple intelligences and that encourage active learning, resulting in generally high levels of participation and engagement.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that the curriculum consistently demands higher order thinking of students at all levels in all subjects.
 - There is a standards-based, vertically aligned curriculum that is enriched with electives and specialized programs. Expectations are high, especially in the honors track which requires three advanced placement courses, and for the 600 athletes who must pass five major subjects. However, tasks across classes are insufficiently rigorous to enable students to produce consistently the high volume and quality of written and oral communication required for college readiness, and students have few opportunities to problem solve.
 - Efforts to close the opportunity gap depend more on programming than on curricular choices within courses, which limits in particular the engagement of many first and second year students. As a result, passing rates of these students are lower.
- Build teacher capacity to use the common data system to enable them to access and aggregate student data at the skill level for improved coordination of learning goals.
 - In response to last year's quality review, the school created a data system to complement ARIS that makes student data across classrooms transparent to all faculty. While the system enables teacher teams to organize and aggregate data and analyze student performance trends to inform curricular and instructional decisions, it is still in its infancy and not yet used by all teacher teams.
- Develop measurable learning targets based on written work and assessment items that are sensitive to students' point of entry so that students are aware of their strengths and next steps and can assume ownership of their learning.
 - Course goals are set by the administration and are clear to faculty, who establish learning goals for their classes and students. Students began to set their own behavior, study skill, and attendance goals last year by completing a "Prescription for Success" in each class which was then signed by parents. Although students find these contracts helpful, they do not reflect on their specific skill needs, as revealed by error analysis and scores on specific traits of the school-wide rubric, to focus more clearly on what and how to improve. Many teachers consider goal attainment a student responsibility and do not reflect on the relationship between their pedagogic practice and student success.
- Distribute leadership to build capacity for all teacher teams to use an inquiry based approach to improve student learning.
 - Although all teachers participate in inquiry teams and understand that the research cycles with the small group should lead to systemic change, many are new to the practice and teams are of uneven quality. More experienced teams have protocols for facilitation and learning from student work and connect their work to curricular change. Others are still developing skills, and are focusing on student behaviors isolated from teacher practice. As a result, not all teachers can exercise leadership and consistently contribute to decisions that affect student learning.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: Sheepshead Bay High School	UD	D	P	WD
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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	
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, 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	

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>	UD	D	P	WD			
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				
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>	UD	D	P	WD			
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				
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>	UD	D	P	WD			
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				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed