

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

John Bowne High School

Q425

**63-25 Main Street
Flushing
NY 11367**

Principal: Howard Kwait

Dates of review: May 22-24, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Juan Mendez

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

John Bowne High School is a high school that consists of 3550 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 19.2% Black, 42.3% Hispanic, 4.9% White, and 32.8% Asian students. The student body includes 25.6% English language learners and 11.3% special education students. Boys account for 49.2% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50.8%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 84.9%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and teachers effectively align curricula to key standards with engaging learning that challenge students and support their learning. (1.1)
 - The school emphasizes key reading and writing standards aligned to Common Core instructional shifts. Teachers integrate Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) aligned units of study and performance tasks in core content areas. The school's Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) outlines a cross-curricular emphasis using CCLS writing standard W.9-10.1, to "write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence." Teachers provide students with a hands-on Common Core curriculum, replete with aligned rubrics, curriculum maps and lesson plans that focus on important ideas and essential questions. For example, the skill of debate is illustrated in inter-disciplinary units that teach argumentation and persuasion, and assists for all students in the development of thesis statements are supported by templates and organizers used to gather evidence based understanding to support arguments. This has resulted in clear teaching goals aligned to a standards-based curriculum.
 - Student work analysis drives the refinement of curricula by all teachers and ensures student engagement in academic tasks. Teachers immerse students in learning experiences that perpetuate both cognition and metacognition as seen in academic tasks that call for annotation and reflection. Students were observed reading complex texts and asking questions aligned to modified writing prompts. The principal notes, "Our writing prompts have changed. More rigorous tasks and texts are now included in the curriculum." Evidence of task refinement surfaces with the school's rigorous research and project based tasks. The rubric criteria from one of these tasks in English language arts (ELA) states: "Elaborates on specific ideas and textual evidence from a variety of sources." The principal acknowledges that, "Teams developed units of study aligned to CCLS with the support of Network staff." Over the past year, this work has resulted in a 10 point increase among students in the graduating cohort who earned a level 4 in English language arts after four years of instruction, rising from 12% to 22% on the 2012 - 2013 New York State Report Card.
- Teaching practices reflect a common belief about student learning and consistently provide purposeful supports to meet varied student needs. (1.2)
 - Teachers share the common belief that comprises an ongoing focus on questions, engagement and assessment as a means to deliver coherent instruction. The majority of classes we visited showcased students immersed in citing evidence from the text and teachers made effective use of text-dependent questions to prompt students to read closely to discern meaning. These approaches are informed through key competencies outlined in the Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE). The result of this work is significantly improved lesson plans that highlight

the effective implementation of critical competencies from the Danielson Framework, which are reflected in student work samples.

- Multiple entry points were evident in many of the classrooms to support student learning. Strategic student grouping based on prior assessment is a common approach at the school, whereby reading passages and questions were differentiated based on student need. In English as a second language (ESL), students were engaged in language acquisition through choral repetition of vocabulary and trained use of the SMARTboard, which aligns text with nonlinguistic representations. In math, real life application accompanied by real-world digital demonstrations was evident. These multiple entry points led to student's use of various strategies to solve problems and manage tasks. In one ELA class, an inter-disciplinary approach utilized a history topic for a discussion of diverse perspectives. The principal referenced a method by educational researcher Isabel Beck, where teachers create entry points for English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs), based on vocabulary comprehension: "Teachers are in the habit of previewing academic vocabulary to unearth tier 1, 2, and 3 words." The impact of these customized scaffolds is evident when viewing the ELL Cohort Performance in ELA which has risen 3% over the past year for all students earning proficiency scores of 3 or better, as indicated on the 2012 - 2013 New York State Report Card.
- Through use of data, leaders and staff monitor the progress of students, to effectively inform instruction and organizational adjustments. (2.2)
 - The school is structured to improve student achievement through curricular alignment that builds upon an arc of assessments from which data is captured and disseminated as actionable feedback to students. Teachers use the data collected from these local assessments to establish and monitor student goals. A uniform school-wide and departmental grading policy prioritizes these assessments due to their close alignment with the instructional emphasis on Literacy Standard 1: "Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text." The results reflect a vivid portrait of all students' needs as well as a significant increase in the number of SWDs who take and pass science, social studies and Geometry Regents examinations. The US History and Government Regents examination illustrates this heightened passing percentage among SWDs, whose rates have soared from 27% to 41% over a one year span, from January 2012 to January 2013.
 - Grade level teams formulate common assessments and pinpoint specific assessment methods not currently used in daily classroom instruction to adjust teaching strategies and tasks, based on student goals and needs. Teachers examine common assessments by question type to uncover how particular students respond. Teachers continue to align their assessment practices so that students can experience a variety of ways to demonstrate what they know and can do across all grades and subject areas. This practice was observed with a teacher team who sought to modify advanced organizers containing transitional words to prepare students for the articulation of arguments. The process of making decisions about curriculum and instruction on the basis of the results of standardized tests is also a frequent means toward improving student

achievement. Another teacher team was observed immersed in the analysis of student work samples, portfolios, classroom assessments, and other evidence to disaggregate results for subgroups so lessons could be planned with the implementation of spiraling techniques. This unified focus on local and state assessments has led to an increase in the percentage of 12th graders classified as ESL students, who pass the New York State English as a Second Language Assessment Test (NYSESLAT) Performance benchmark over the last year.

- The principal has created a goal-oriented learning community, well focused on student outcomes, with a shared commitment to accelerate learning. (3.1)
 - The principal has a keen vision for school improvement that focuses on critical and comprehensive school-wide goals that are effectively tracked. Goals in teacher observations and attendance are at the forefront of action plans that are delineated in both the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) and Principal Performance Review (PPR). Interim checkpoints ensure that these goals are adequately monitored. For example, frequent formative classroom observations are designed to identify targeted competencies aligned to the Danielson's Framework. The data from these observations is closely tracked and the instructional emphasis varies across cycles: cycle 1 on questioning; cycle 2 on engagement; cycle 3 on assessment; and cycle 4 on designing coherent instruction. The principal points out that, "All goals are reviewed weekly with the cabinet and monthly with the School Leadership Team." Moreover, vital attendance goals are addressed weekly by attendance teachers and the assistant principal for guidance, so timely follow-up can be provided. Parents of students who are chronically absent are invited to orientations that emphasize effective habits and perpetuate a shared commitment toward understanding the correlation between attendance and academic achievement. Over the past year, the school's attendance rate has moved from 84.1% to 84.9%, and over the past two years, the number of student dropouts has decreased from 7% to 5%.
 - Data-driven instructional approaches impact student learning by leading to professional development planning that provides clear direction for teacher training. Itemized analysis of Regents examination results have led to trainings for English and mathematics teachers that focus on designing questions that emulate those on State assessments. Additionally, teacher teams connect areas where students struggle with Common Core shifts in curriculum and instruction in order to identify instructional strategies, such as previewing texts, to accelerate the learning of a large population of ESL students. These interdisciplinary connections and collegial supports have also yielded multiple joint departmental conferences as the English department has met with the ESL and Social Studies departments to co-plan and adjust curricula and tasks, based on critical data-findings. In addition, data driven instruction is also used by the Earth Science team, who took the initiative to modify the first ten days of uniform lessons to include greater levels of specificity on the Earth Science Reference Tables. As a result, the school has narrowed the gap among all students in math as the New York State Report Card reveals that 4 year proficiency results for students earning a level three or better have grown from 75% to 80% over the past year.

What the school needs to improve

- Prioritize the use of resources in order to expand academic programs in support of the school's instructional goals. (1.3)
 - The school offers a plethora of programs that provide hands-on experiences. An ongoing partnership with Doshi Diagnostic Laboratories enhances the gifted and talented Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) program, which emphasizes science, math, technology and engineering and engages students in scientific exploration. However, the school's nationally recognized agricultural program is limited in its capacity to accommodate the large numbers of students who have repeatedly expressed interest. For instance, last year the highly coveted Introduction to Agriculture program provided only 200 seats for 962 applicants. This limitation of resources aligned to the school's instructional goals around science results in 22% of students who are refused acceptance into this distinctive opt-in program that continues to harvest attention, thus not fully supporting the school's instructional goals aligned to science for all students.
 - School leaders have developed the school's hiring process to the extent that now applicants are interviewed and required to take an assessment as well as conduct a demonstration lesson. Although this has enabled the school to pinpoint a teacher's particular skills, the alignment of teacher preferences to their ability is still in need of modification. For example, most of the teachers whose scores fell on last year's State accountability assessments remain in the same teaching assignments. While the school actively seeks to place teachers with specific cohorts of students to close the achievement gap, teacher assignments are not strategically made with the use of multiple teacher data sources to track student success. This hinders the selection of the most effective teachers to collaboratively prepare targeted students, particularly English language learners, with career and college readiness skills. Consequently, the number of students passing the Comprehensive English Regents examination has decreased by 9% over the past year.
- Increase opportunities offered to the school community, to promote active student leadership in support of personal and academic development. (1.4)
 - School leaders are developing approaches to culture-building that entail boosting school spirit and increasing programs that connect to the school community at large. Programs such as Future Farmers of America and JROTC were referenced by parents who stated that "these are the school's strengths that need to be expanded." The initiation of several community service projects is a developing endeavor at the school, and clubs like the Aspire Club and ARISTA have been instrumental in shaping environments where student leaders surface and student voice is heard. However, most students point out that more theme-based programs that drive student leadership are desirable. The Learning Environment Survey (LES) validates that students feel innumerable high-interest activities to participate in both before and after school, are limited. One student states, "Some students are not inspired to learn because they do not have programs or courses connected to their interest or that boost self-motivation." Although parents are called upon to promote key topics

among their children, such as college readiness and cyber bullying, parents expressed that the workshops were insufficient because, "The community has the wrong perception of the school," and this is due to uneven media coverage in support of school accolades. Thus, student leadership is infrequently documented in channels that drive community outreach and ongoing community support.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School Name: John Bowne High School	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score			X				
Instructional Core							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, including the arts, physical and health education, 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 that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to curricula, engaging and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?			X				
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels?			X				
School Culture							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?		X					
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?			X				
Systems for Improvement							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet students' learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			X				
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?				X			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework 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				
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed