



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

**Quality Review  
Office of School Quality  
Division of Academics, Performance, and Support  
2013-2014**

# **Quality Review Report 2013-2014**

**The Cobble Hill School of American Studies**

**High School 519**

**347 Baltic Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11201**

**Principal: Annamaria Mule**

**Dates of review: December 5 - 6, 2013**

**Lead Reviewer: Victoria Armas**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Cobble Hill School of American Studies is a high school with 619 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 72% Black, 20% Hispanic, 3% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 84.4%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- School leaders make highly effective organizational decisions that are well aligned to instructional goals resulting in challenging academic tasks and meaningful student work products. (1.3)
  - The school puts forth the Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) program that supports the development of students' skills in organization, reading, writing, inquiry, and collaboration, which teachers infuse into classroom instruction. Each teacher uses an external flash drive with AVID instructional materials and resources to support his/her planning. Consequently, students have benefitted from AVID, particularly in organizational aspects in their work, as evidenced by the maintaining of binders of notes and tasks by subject areas. Additionally, consistent reading and writing strategies through students' use of graphic organizers were noted in several content area courses that support the writing process and improved comprehension, including the annotation of text and close reading strategies. In addition, students work collaboratively in groups and build on their ideas by calling on one another during discussions as observed during a science lesson. Furthermore, building upon outside resources, the College Summit program for seniors was expanded this year to include eleventh graders to support the college application process. Partnering with College Now, courses in English, Biology, African Studies, and Psychology, among others, are offered through City Tech for college credit. Additionally, a leadership program prepares selected students through focused training to support their peers in college readiness, and the creation of a college going culture resulting in an increase in the school's college enrollment rate from 29.5% in 2010-2011 to 40.6% in 2012-2013.
  - Lead teachers support teacher teams that meet daily on the ninth and tenth grade levels as they review student work and adjust instruction. In addition, departments meet on Monday afternoons and Friday mornings to engage in professional development and plan curriculum. This work has focused teachers more intently on providing effective instruction and assessments. Through the development of content-specific curricula maps aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), including performance-based assessments, students' are supported in mastering the content, resulting in improved credit accumulation for students in the lowest third earning ten or more credits in their first year, an increase from 60.4% in 2011-2012 to 70.0% in 2012-2013.
- The school has established a culture that is responsive to the needs of students, resulting in positive academic and personal behaviors, as well as a safe environment conducive to learning. (1.4)
  - School leaders, teachers, deans, and guidance counselors, are available to meet with students to address their needs, concerns, and issues. Parents stated, "no one is ever too busy and the school finds time for everything." Guidance counselors provide classroom presentations on a variety of topics and loop with grade level cohorts so that students are

well known throughout their high school experience, as noted by students who indicated that they were comfortable approaching a counselor or a teacher with issues that may arise. In addition, weekly advisory groups focus on supporting the ninth grade transition into high school. An elected student leadership council plans events for the school community, including festivals in the fall and spring, trips, and senior activities such as a breakfast for students and parents, a barbecue, senior trip, and yearbook. A college fair, conducted two times a year, and college trips to Vassar, Queensborough Community College, Fordham University, Rutgers University, and Queens College are offered to familiarize students with college communities so that they may make informed decisions regarding where they will apply to college. Moreover, the school implementation team (SIT), pupil personnel team, and attendance committee, each meet bi-weekly. Attendance is further supported by the community-based organization (CBO), the Partnership with Schools, which targets students with excessive absences to establish relationships with families by visiting each incoming freshman in the program, as well as providing weekly counseling sessions, resulting in an increase in attendance from 76% in 2010-2011 to 84.4%.

- Teachers use assessment practices that are aligned with the school's curricula to determine progress toward goals and identify learning gaps in order to provide feedback and adjust instruction. (2.2 )
  - Teachers collaboratively create CCLS aligned performance-based assessments, rubrics tailored to a variety of tasks including group work, and activities, as well as establish grading policies by department that incorporate class work, participation, homework, projects, exams and essays. Additionally, teachers maintain data binders for tracking student progress on weekly and bi-monthly assessments. They also note the results of student data relative to the strategies developed during teacher team and then implemented to address students' needs. Furthermore, cycles of inquiry conducted during teacher team meetings identify students at risk of failing a course in order to provide interventions that include tutoring and extra support from content area teachers. The school utilizes an online system called Skedula/Pupil Path that is accessible to teachers, students, and parents, and provides information on grades, homework, and assignments, resulting in ongoing feedback regarding student progress and achievement.
  - Performance based assessments are created and administered across grades and subject areas, the results of which are analyzed and disaggregated by teacher teams to identify gaps in student learning that are addressed in the planning of subsequent units of study. One area identified included students' inability to develop counter claims in argumentative writing. This was addressed by providing quotes during an English language arts (ELA) activity called "Do Now and Then Some", which provided opportunities for students to support both pro and con ideas listed on a graphic organizer. Students then developed their ideas into rationales to support both sides of a claim in paragraphs, which evolved into a longer piece of writing, promoting a better understanding of the genre, and resulting in stronger argumentative writing.

- The school community effectively establishes clear, focused goals that are tracked for progress and communicated to all stakeholders resulting in increased student achievement. (3.1 )
  - The school's data-based goals are collaboratively developed by all stakeholders and include increasing students' mastery in math, improving supports for students with disabilities (SWDs), and increasing college and career readiness (CCR) rates. The assistant principal of organization (APO) compiles data regularly that is shared with other school leaders, guidance counselors, individual teachers, and teacher teams, to monitor and track the progress of the lowest third, English language learners (ELLs) and SWDs, as well as Regents achievement each semester. An analysis of performance on Regents exams yielded inconsistencies in students' ability to respond adequately to extended response questions, which prompted an instructional focus on writing including note-taking strategies, the use of graphic organizers, and vocabulary building. This targeted instructional work has resulted in increased course passing rates for all populations this school year with an average of 74% passing the first making period, to 79.6% passing for the second marking period. The highest gains were noted for the tenth grade cohort for SWDs, who increased their passing rates from one marking period to the next by 15.3 percentage points.
  - The school leadership team (SLT) represents all members of the community including school leaders, teachers, parents, and students. The SLT in conjunction with a request from students initiated changes in the overall school culture through community building activities including trips and events that have resulted in an improved environment, as evidenced by a change in the school environment score on the Progress Report from a "C" in 2011-2012 to an "A" in 2012-2013. Town hall meetings, parent teacher association (PTA) meetings, advisories, guidance, and cohort meetings that include parents, as well as a school website, provide forums for communicating information, including progress toward goals.

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

- Deepen the refinement of academic tasks with an emphasis on rigorous habits and higher order skills so that a diversity of learners have access to the curricula and are able to demonstrate their thinking. (1.1)
  - The school uses templates provided by the Literacy Design Collaborative for planning units that promotes curricular coherence. Curricula included evidence of the CCLS shifts incorporating the use of complex texts, text based answers, the use of academic vocabulary, and citing evidence in lessons and units for ELA; while the ability to explain math concepts in writing, and real world applications were evident in science and math units. Additionally, Costa's Levels of Thinking are utilized by teachers and students for the development of questions to promote higher order skills. Although academic tasks are refined and adapted according to data analysis during teacher team inquiry sessions, and are planned to be rigorous and aligned to standards, there are few modifications noted on lesson plans, and none indicated on unit plans to support access to the

curricula for special populations, or extensions for higher achievers, limiting cognitive engagement for all learners. (b, c)

- Enhance instructional practices across classrooms to consistently provide multiple entry points so that lessons cognitively engage all students in order to promote high levels of thinking and participation. (1.2 )
  - Teaching strategies in some classrooms reflect attempts to engage students in meaningful and relevant ways. Modeling was evident in all classrooms, as well as strategies to support accountable talk, and close reading so students suitably respond and interact with text. An English as a second language (ESL) lesson provided a series of scaffolded activities to support reading comprehension. A couple of classes observed offered two versions of a graphic organizer and a worksheet as differentiated support. Native language textbooks in Spanish are available in science and social studies courses. Although there are supports available in some classes, such multiple entry points into lessons are inconsistently provided across classrooms, limiting opportunities for all students' to access appropriately challenging tasks that provide opportunities to demonstrate their thinking.
  - Students engage in collaborative annotation and silent conversations that are written comments in response to one another that are documented on charts to promote higher order thinking. In addition, some classes integrate the use of an open forum, which allows students to agree and/or disagree with a peer's idea and call on one another during discussions in preparation for Socratic seminars. Although there was some evidence of student discussions in classrooms, this was not observed in the majority of classrooms visited, hindering higher levels of participation by all students across content areas.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

<b>School name:</b> The Cobble Hill School of American Studies	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>				
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards?		<b>X</b>					
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?		<b>X</b>					
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?			<b>X</b>				
<b>School Culture</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			<b>X</b>				
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations?			<b>X</b>				
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products?				<b>X</b>			
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?			<b>X</b>				
4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection?			<b>X</b>				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>