Office of Innovative School Models
Persistently Lowest Achieving (PLA) Schools
School Improvement Grant (SIG)
Monitoring Report

School:	Cobble Hill School for American Studies – Transformation Model	School District:	New York City Department of Education District # 15
Date of Site-Visit:	April 13, 2011 (Second Visit)	Members of Site-Visit Team:	Erica Cervine, Susan Gibbons, Patrick Roche

STAFFING	
Collective Bargaining	*Negotiations are continuing regarding revision of the collective bargaining agreement in order to support: development of a teacher evaluation system, removal of staff based on the evaluation system and changes in work day, duties and hours.*
Teacher Evaluations linked to Student Performance	*Teacher evaluations linked to student performance have been put into place. The system and data used must be consistent with State APPR system.*
Identify and Reward staff or Remediate/Remove Staff	*A clear and transparent process for identifying staff for rewards and remediation is in place (A process must be in place immediately upon the development and implementation of the Teacher Evaluation System).*
Implementation of Strategies to Recruit, Place, and Retain Qualified Staff	*Activities are funded to recruit, place, and/or retain highly qualified teachers.*

Findings:
- School leaders indicated the eleven NYCDoE transformation schools of the 2010-11 school year are currently piloting the teacher effectiveness rubric.
- In their focus group sessions, both school leaders and teachers stated the school has been implementing the new teacher effectiveness rubric since February 1, 2011. School leaders are currently conducting formal and informal teacher observations using the new rubric.
- School leaders stated there is a monthly calendar of formal observations for teachers. Untenured teachers are observed a minimum of four times per year; tenured teachers a minimum of twice per year, with pre- and post-conferences as well as written reports. Additional feedback is given in the form of "Learning Walks."
- Teacher effectiveness information gathered from formal and informal observations is entered into a database/tracker. The tracker allows the principal and assistant principals to input qualitative data on observations. Teachers indicated some uneasiness about this. They mentioned the ways in which the data would be used was unclear.

- The Principal reported the school is using the Tracker system to record both formal and informal classroom observations for teacher evaluation. The principal stated "the system is a good tool but entering the data is time intensive".
- The teacher effectiveness rubric is based loosely on the Danielson model and was developed by the New York City Department of Education (NYCDoE), United Federation of Teachers (UFT) and the teacher effectiveness committee.
- During their focus group session, teachers acknowledged the understanding that their evaluations would be based in part on student data beginning in September, 2011, but were not sure of specifics. According to the administration, the reward/remediation process is still under negotiation for next year's implementation.
- School leaders indicated teacher evaluations will be linked to student performance in the eleven PLA schools. Performance based assessment, to be created by NYC DoE, will be included as part of this link as well. Teachers administered the first pilot performance based assessment in April.
- School leaders stated a post assessment would be given in May, 2011 and results would be compared to see if students made progress.
- The principal demonstrated the Tracker program, highlighting how both formal and informal observations are aligned with the NYCDoE teacher effectiveness rubric.
- The Network Leader spoke of the teacher effectiveness rubric implementation, conducting walkthroughs of classrooms, and modeling difficult conversations with teachers about evaluations. Most teachers reported an appreciation of the feedback.
- The school has been chosen as a lab site for inter-visitations in science, with four cycles per semester. The topics they address are student engagement, curriculum, assessment, and differentiated instruction. There are fall and spring groups and one advanced session. Teachers write reflective letters to their principals after each visit.
- According to school leaders, the Teacher Effectiveness Manager from NYCDoE visits the school once a week in support of the teacher evaluation process.

PLANNING	
Implementation of Timeline	*The district/school is on track to complete activities in accordance with the approved timeline for implementation, or to submit an approvable School Improvement Grant (SIG) application. Identify elements that are off-track.*
Performance Targets	*The district/school is implementing activities which will help them meet the school's performance targets. (Performance targets are tied to the school's achieving "In Good Standing" by the end of the 3 year grant period. Refer to the school's Performance Plan Template, as available.)*
Implementation of JIT Recommendations	*The district and school are implementing the plan based on the JIT recommendations. The recommendations of the JIT are addressed as delineated in the SIG application or Restructuring Plan, as applicable.*

Findings:
- The School Implementation Manager had not been hired at the time of the site visit.
- As delineated in its School Improvement Grant (SIG) application, the school planned to hire three master teachers. At the time of the visit, the three master teachers that were hired in the Fall were continuing to serve as Master Teachers.
- School leaders stated the Master Teachers are working well, although there is no alternative for the school if they do not. NYCDoE is currently discussing the options schools may have for transferring out Master Teachers who do not fit within the school as a master teacher.

- The administrative and teacher focus groups indicated they are satisfied with the partners, vendors, and the professional development that has been provided to them.
- School leaders, teachers and a data specialist reported the school collects, distributes and analyzes data to track attendance and credit acquisition. This information is aligned directly with adequate yearly progress (AYP) requirements.
- The administrators indicated they would like more flexibility with the use of the grant money. They indicated they are told by DoE certain programs cannot be purchased because they are not SIG approved.
- The school leader expressed satisfaction with the Transformation Mentor Principal.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	
Quality, On-going, Job-embedded Professional Development	*Implementing job-embedded professional development, as defined by the USED, and as approved by NYSED.*
Supportive of Instructional Needs	*All professional development is researched based and supportive of the instructional needs of the school.*
Monitoring and Analysis	*Professional development is monitored and analyzed to ensure staff participation and classroom implementation.*

Findings:
- During their focus group session, teachers indicated professional development has come from a number of different sources. Examples include, master teachers, assistant principals, Children First Network (CFN) and outside educational partners.
- School leaders and teachers stated they have received professional development relating to the teacher effectiveness rubric. The professional development pertained to the use of the rubric as an observation tool, as well as an instructional planning vehicle.
- Administrators mentioned coaching for teachers was provided regarding the implementation of guided discipline. Guided discipline is a means of proactively deescalating conflicts to create a culture conducive to learning. Guided discipline is implemented in most of the school.
- The administrators stated the Master Teachers conduct professional development in and across subject areas. Common planning time for subject areas has doubled this year, to twice a week. Areas of discussion include data, assessment results and planning.
- School leaders and teachers indicated monthly faculty meetings are devoted to professional development provided by AUSSIE on such topics as differentiated instruction and higher order thinking questions. Teachers also meet in small groups and one-on-one with teacher coaches.
- Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR) coaches provide coaching to individual teachers regarding classroom management.
- Teachers reported AVID uses Castle Learning to assign homework using mostly Regents-type questions.
- School leaders and teachers stated Sheridan Learning and Teaching Environment (SLATE) is providing professional development on multiple intelligences and learning styles, using a "kaleidoscope" tool to determine the learning styles of teachers. During the summer a series of professional development related to the multiple intelligences will be conducted. Six teachers

have volunteered for this series. The Master Teachers will turnkey this training for the faculty.
- Teachers reported common planning sessions are held on Mondays and department meetings are held on Wednesdays. These meetings discuss a range of topics, some of which are tied to student achievement.
- Teachers stated they have had two professional development sessions on Datacation. The ninth grade team meetings are using Datacation in inquiry groups to identify students to target for additional help or to address home problems and identify interventions.
- Teachers indicated the network offers some professional development from Teachers College and other NYC agencies. Other professional development is paid for out of the regular school budget or the grant funds.
- Teachers reported professional development participation surveys are used to evaluate the professional development.
- Teachers indicated discussions are occurring regarding the school's need for an increase in rigor. Professional development opportunities around rigor are being explored.
- The administrative focus group reported that a teacher effectiveness training that is open to multiple schools is held at Cobble Hill.

DATA ANALYSIS	
Data to Inform Instructional Programming	*Data is used to identify and implement research-based instructional programs that are aligned with state standards*
Data for Instructional Decisions for Student Achievement	*A system is being implemented which allows for the continuous use of data to make instructional decisions for students.*

Findings:
- During their focus group sessions, teachers and school leaders stated Skedula.com is used by staff to input, monitor and analyze student data (i.e., attendance, grades, credits, schedules, grades, etc.).
- The administration reported Datacation is in use and fully implemented throughout the school. The administration uses the program to look at sub-group performance, classroom level data, and to identify trends. Parents and students have the ability to view this data as well.
- Teachers indicated they use Datacation to link to their own websites for homework, videos, and anecdotal records. They say it is a powerful tool for parents and students. It forces students to take responsibility for themselves.
- Teachers stated they make comparisons across classrooms using data from pre- and post-testing to identify strengths and weaknesses. They also conduct item analyses during common planning time on the pre- and post-tests to inform instruction, especially in science, math and ELA.
- The Quality Improvement Process Inquiry Team has an action team which meets every week and has a data point focus. For example, the day prior to the site visit the team reviewed grade nine credit accumulation for students with disabilities.
- Teachers reported Achieve 3000 is being implemented and provides immediate feedback on reading abilities. They are happy with Achieve 3000 but indicated they would like the Wilson program back as well so the data collection can be more dynamic.

CURRICULUM AND TEACHING

Increased Learning Time	*The school has implemented a longer school day, week, or school year to significantly increase the total number of school hours to provide additional time for instruction in core academic subjects, or in enrichment subject areas, or added time for teacher collaboration.*
Mapped and Paced Curriculum	*The written district/school level curriculum is aligned to NYS standards, performance indicators, the core competencies and is being implemented. Pacing guides are developed, used and monitored.*
Instructional Programming is Linked to Needs Assessment	*Curricular decisions have been made to meet the needs of all students.*
Effective Teaching	*There is evidence of rigor, relevance, pacing, and alignment of curriculum to State Standards, and student engagement from Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT).*
ELL/SWD	*The necessary instructional programs and highly qualified staff are in place to support the needs of English Language Learners (ELL) and students with disabilities (SWD).*

Findings:
- Teachers indicated an evolving shift towards collaboration and peer-planning as a result of common planning time and school leadership directives.
- Although improved from the first visit, the site visit team observed varying levels of rigor and engagement in the classrooms visited. In thirteen of the twenty-one classrooms observed, the start of class was delayed considerably or instruction was disturbed due to behavior and classroom management issues. During the teacher interview, teachers indicated there are no classroom management issues.
- The site visit team observed the implementation of guided discipline. For example, Do Now's and guided encouragement were observed in some classrooms.
- School leaders indicated all grade nine through eleven students take the state assessments, including students with disabilities and ELLs.
- School leaders stated students are encouraged to be prepared for college. College preparatory classes are available to students beginning in the tenth grade. The school is implementing a strong push for students to excel.
- Students also have the option to take classes at CityTech. The administration reported they have one senior who is graduating with 12 college credits.
- Summer curriculum work is planned to further flesh out the curriculum maps by aligning units of study to the appropriate standard and topic.

STUDENT SUPPORT	
Additional Support	*Students are receiving extra academic and developmental support based on student need (AIS, character development, PBIS).*
Counseling	*Student support services are in place to provide students in need with additional social support (education/career counseling, social work, drug/alcohol/violence counseling, school psychologist, health/mental health professional)*
Enrichment Opportunities	*Students have opportunities to participate in academic and social enrichment activities during and after the school day and during the summer.*

Findings:

- Approximately 100 students take part in the Leadership Program as reported by a Leadership Program representative. The Leadership Program provides students with homework help and opportunities to participate in activities that build their leadership skills.
- According to school leaders, the Partnership for Children places 6-8 social workers in the school every day. They use a United Way program to track students who are receiving counseling services.
- The Attendance Intervention Dropout Prevention (AIDP) program focuses on attendance intervention and dropout prevention. They work with about 110 students, who come into the school with poor attendance histories and/or twenty or more accumulated absences. They also run an after school program where students may earn school credits.
- The administration reported the Quality Improvement Process Inquiry Team (QIP) holds weekly meeting on ninth grade credit accumulation for students with disabilities. The team includes the special education coordinator, the guidance counselor, principal and teachers. The team's goal is to surpass the credit recovery goal for the ninth grade by moving from thirty-six percent to fifty-six percent student credit recovery.
- Administrators stated Achieve 3000 is used once or twice a week with ninth graders (including students with disabilities and ELLs) to work on developing and increasing reading skills and levels.
- School leaders stated they are trying to challenge students with college level courses through College Now, including City Tech, Brooklyn Arts and Cooper Union. The goal is for students to be prepared for college, not just do well in high school. They want to accelerate students and add college credit for them. Several students participate in the Brooklyn Historical Society Curator Project.
- School leaders reported Global Studies is being taught in a 90 minute block in tenth grade so that eleventh grade ELA can have a 90 minute block as well.
- Administration reported their new partner, College Summit, provides students support with college applications, writing college essays, and college entry interview practice. This is an elective class for twelfth graders, seventy-nine of whom have been accepted into college. One of the Guidance Counselors has been designated as full time college advisor.
- Students reported graduation requirements have been made clear to all students and are continually reinforced by staff.
- Tutoring support continues to be provided before the school day begins as reported by all focus groups.

TRANSFORMATIONAL SCHOOL LEADERSHIP	
Effective Leadership	*The school leader has the experience and skills needed to successfully implement a turnaround model and to act as a change agent for the school.*
Leadership Development	*School leaders receive appropriate and timely professional development. Mentoring or coaching programs are in place and effective.*
School Improvement Manager/External Providers	*The school is being guided and informed by its partnership with its School Improvement Manager or external provider.*
Building Level Leadership Team	*The school is utilizing its Building Leadership Team to implement the intervention model.*

Findings:
- During their focus groups session, teachers indicated the administration is always supportive. They did feel there was a lack of communication between the administration and the staff but also indicated the communication was getting better.

- The administrators have been trained on how to rate teachers on the standards in the teacher evaluation rubrics.
- Professional development for school leaders includes teacher effectiveness rubric training, quality review, inquiry teams, common core standards, data analysis, interstate visits, and adult development and learning, from such sources as the Children First Network and Columbia University.
- Teachers indicated they are unclear about how the final evaluation is going to look and were unsure about the ways the evaluation was going to be used.
- Teachers reported the school leader attended several of the Saturday professional development sessions.

SCHOOL CLIMATE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	
Environment is Conducive to Learning	*The school is safe, orderly and academically-oriented. Supervision is sufficient, respectful and consistent.*
Shared Vision	*School staff understands the focus/ vision of the school's improvement efforts and supports them in a consistent and effective manner.*
Collaboration	*Administrators, teachers and staff communicate openly, positively and effectively. Professional learning communities exist and affect improvement efforts.*
Parent Involvement	*Strategies are being implemented to increase the involvement and contributions of parents.*
External/Community-Based Partners	*Strategies are being implemented to increase the involvement and contributions of community partners.*

Findings:
- The site visit team observed hallways and common areas that were clean, well-maintained, and appropriately supervised. Students reported since the site visit teams January visit, bathrooms are locked and hallway enforcement is more common.
- Students also reported the addition of new school rules, new teachers, and a new principal have contributed positively to the school environment.
- Teachers were observed to demonstrate caring relationships with individual students. Students referred to the "presence" of good teachers.
- The site visit team observed progress since the last report around concerns of students wandering in the hallways and disruptions in the classroom. The school is implementing the guided discipline system. The "Do Now" activities and student work on display was seen in most classrooms observed. It was apparent that staff was making concerted efforts to get students in their appropriate locations when they were lingering in the hallways.
- The graduation rate has increased slightly over the past two years, to sixty-three percent, according to the school leaders. The target goal is eighty percent.
- Parent involvement, according to the administrators, is increasing. Various events draw a lot of parents into the school, especially when students invite their own parents. Examples of events included: a holiday extravaganza, an award ceremony in March which drew 100 parents, a school talent show which was a fundraiser for a health program, a teen pregnancy prevention program, and a principal's dinner which includes a discussion of issues and concerns. Parent workshops had been tried as a vehicle for parent involvement, but were unsuccessful, so different events are now the norm.
- The principal stated she talks to parents every day, sends out a newsletter five times a year, and uses a phone master system for general messages. Parents also have access to Pupil Path, the parent component of Datacation, which allows parents to see their students' transcripts, examination history, and

schedule, and give them email access to teachers, Deans, and Guidance Counselors.
- The teachers stated things are starting to come together but the administration doesn't know all the answers.
- Most parents reported the school is a good school and their students feel safe. One parent expressed that their child gets frustrated because children are not listening and they are throwing papers in classrooms while the teachers are trying to teach.

OTHER FUNDING SOURCES	
Use of 1003(g) or 1003(a) grant funding	*The LEA is using School Improvement Grant (SIG) funding to support the implementation of or planning for school intervention models.*
Use of Other Funding Sources besides 1003 (g)	*In addition to SIG 1003(g) and/or 1003(a) funds, the LEA is using a number of other resources to implement the school intervention models or the Restructuring Plan, as applicable.*

Findings:
- A representative from Partnership with Children reported the partner program receives grant funding through United Way.
- A representative from Leadership reported the partner program receives federal funding through the 21st Century Community Learning grant.

DISTRICT SUPPORT AND PLANNING FOR DEVELOPMENT	
District Support Provides Operational Flexibility to the School	*The LEA provides or is planning to provide the school operational flexibility (such as matters regarding staffing, calendars/time, and budgeting).*
District has a systemic plan for intervention and improvement	*The LEA has incorporated all JIT recommendations and requirements of the SIG Application into the improvement plan for the school.*
District has a plan to identify, recruit, place, and retain effective leadership	*In accordance with SIG requirements, the LEA has a plan for hiring and retaining leadership.*

Findings:

- Network and district representatives have been working with staff from the eleven NYCDoE transformation schools, providing professional development for teacher effectiveness evaluations. The schools have been meeting together for mutual support, school improvement planning, and student assessment training. Cobble Hill School for American Studies serves as one of the meeting sites.
- School leaders reported a positive relationship with their Network Leader. The Network Leader assists the school leadership and coordinates school partnership efforts.
- The Network Leader reported assisting school leaders with the teacher effectiveness rubric implementation, conducting walkthroughs and modeling difficult conversations with teachers about evaluations.

Summary:

The State Education Department three member site visit team conducted a full-day visit to Cobble Hill School for American Studies on April 13, 2011. Although the visit was brief, the team was able to ascertain information about the school's efforts regarding the implementation of their reform model for improving student learning.

The school continues to display adequate implementation of the transformation model. The school is continuing to develop its vendor/partner relationships and has implemented programs to make progress in areas highlighted in the needs assessment of the SIG application. Areas of the model that are not being implemented are in relation to the services the district is to provide to the school, such as the School Improvement Manager not hired at the time of the visit.

Although improved from the first visit, the site visit team observed varying levels of rigor and engagement in the classrooms visited. In some cases, the start of class was delayed considerably due to behavior and classroom management issues. The staff did indicate awareness of this by indicating that rigor was an area of focus for future curriculum development.

During the next full day visit, the team will also focus on findings outlined in this report and will again conduct document reviews and interviews in the following areas: staffing; planning; professional development; data analysis; curriculum and teaching; student support; school leadership; school climate and community engagement; and district support and planning for development.