



# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**Brooklyn School for Collaborative Studies**

**Public School 448**

**610 Henry Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11231**

**Principal: Alyce Barr**

**Dates of review: February 7 - 8, 2007**

**Reviewer: Renee Middleton**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Brooklyn School for Collaborative Studies serves 564 students from grades 6 to 10. The school is transforming from middle to secondary school enrollment over the next two years.

The ethnicity of students in the school is diverse, with an enrollment of 46% Black students and 35% of students who are Hispanic. The remaining proportions of students are White, 14%, Asian, 2%, and Native American, 1%. The percentages of students recently arrived in the country are below that of similar and City schools, with most recent arrivals from Trinidad and Tobago, Bangladesh and Belize.

There are 135 special education students (24%), and a very small proportion of English language learners. The average attendance rate for the school is 91.6% which is in line with similar schools, and above the average for City schools. The school does not receive Title 1 Funding.

The school is an Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound School, with a curriculum that aims to bring subjects together into a meaningful experience for students.

Empowerment schools have more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their school community. Empowerment schools are free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with, and benefit from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements.

This school is currently engaged in a research project to design its own periodic assessment materials.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The strategies developed by the principal, in collaboration with the high school director, assistant principal, and other school leaders have been successful in establishing effective management systems to move the school forward.
- The principal and staff have created a stimulating learning environment through engaging learning expeditions, fieldwork, the arts, and the mandated curriculum.
- The school has developed programs of professional development clearly linked to whole-school priorities.
- There is effective use of 'periodic assessments, which improves students' reading in all grades.
- The school has established connectivity between the core curriculum, the extended day, and additional after-school programs to provide a continuum of learning opportunities for students.
- Staff plan and work collaboratively with a high level of commitment to the school and students to raise their achievement.
- There is effective support for students with a range of needs and strengths including challenge for high achievers.
- Students appreciate the fact that staff know and support them well; they work hard, behave well, and are proud of their school.
- School attendance has steadily improved.
- The new parent coordinator supports the work of the school in building parental cooperation and confidence in the school's ability to improve and grow further.

### What the school needs to improve

- Develop systematic use of data through the use of longitudinal tracking and disaggregation of data across all subject areas to inform decisions within the whole school and for individual students.
- Continue to develop structures within portfolio and expedition projects that identify distinct subject areas and skills within the existing and developing curriculum to grade 12, including college link programs.
- Continue to develop subject and skill-specific rubrics to inform assessment of students' progress and achievement.
- Develop teachers' use of data and periodic assessments to plan differentiated work to meet students' needs more closely.
- Formalize monitoring logs, records and observation criteria.
- Establish, through collaborative processes, short- and medium-term priorities for school improvement, setting these out in a clear action plan with timelines and measurable targets.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

**This is a proficient school with well-developed features.**

The Brooklyn School for Collaborative Studies has a richly-designed curriculum to meet the mandated standards while providing a multidisciplinary and project-based experience which weaves together science, mathematics, the arts, technology and media, and social studies within its units of study. The curriculum programs seek to interest and engage young people, to raise their aspirations, and to focus them upon their own personal achievement. As the school is yet to grow to grades 11 and 12, there is still much to develop.

The principal works strategically with her team of school leaders. She is a highly respected leader who is developing staff potential and their involvement at all levels in order to meet the school's commitment that the school 'helps students work together to shape the community'. The school's plans and goals address the continued need to develop teachers' effective professional practice and differentiated instruction.

The use of action research and periodic assessments effectively inform practice and promote students' achievement, especially in developing students' reading interests and skills. The school has already made a positive impact on student learning by mapping its curriculum, setting whole-school goals, and addressing students' diverse learning needs as the school develops.

### How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The strategies and data management systems developed by the principal, in collaboration with the high school director, assistant principal, and other key staff are moving the school forward. The school uses a sufficient range of tools and assessments in order to understand the performance and progress of students. The school is in the first cohort of schools to design its own systems for undertaking periodic assessments and has successfully used action research in developing this process. This has proved to be a great benefit to the school and reflects the very positive link with the Teachers' College, with whom they have worked on developing their assessments.

Tracking of the performance and progress of special education students has improved greatly this year since becoming a responsibility of the assistant principal. She also ensures that individual education plans are reviewed at appropriate and mandated intervals. The new system of periodic assessment has supported the identification of specific deficits for special education students. The progress of the small number of English language learners is tracked individually and differentiated support based on data analyzed is provided.

The school looks for and considers patterns in students' performance defined by grade levels and uses observations to investigate what is happening in the classroom when issues are identified. The practice of using further qualitative data to determine if teaching and learning is equally effective for all students is at an early stage.

The school has identified similar schools in the city and further away, and is developing a network that will, in part, allow it to measure its own performance and standards. The school is also visited regularly by others looking at good practice.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

Staff plan and work collaboratively, with a high level of commitment to the school and students to accelerate students' learning. Teachers regularly discuss strategies and support each other with planning, alongside guidance from coaches and school leaders. They meet both in grade teams and in subject departments, and the culture of school growth is fostered through the use of data to examine progress. Support has been given to enable teachers to be confident in using the data that they acquire and enable them to tailor their instruction to the changing needs of students and within multidisciplinary projects.

There is effective support for students with a range of needs. Teachers and school leaders identify students whose performance is on the border between one level and another in order to enable them to maximize students' learning. A range of goals is set for students receiving academic intervention and for special education students. Older students who had acquired fewer than five credits benefited from the "14 Day Challenge". Those students identified as being most at risk are given particular attention through academic intervention strategies. Students appreciate the academic guidance and feedback they receive.

The school leaders are developing the skills of the lead teachers in their use of data to set precise interim and personal goals for students. Students' responsibility for their own performance is encouraged through their own participation at parent-teacher conferences, where they are expected to talk about their academic performance.

The school works hard to involve parents so that they understand more about the school's approaches. Parents say that they are kept informed of any issues about progress so that they can better support their children's learning. The new parent coordinator positively supports the work of the school in building parental cooperation and confidence among parents in the school's ability to improve and grow further.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The principal and staff have created a stimulating learning environment through engaging learning expeditions, fieldwork, the arts, and the mandated curriculum. The school has effectively established connectivity between the core curriculum, the extended day, and additional after-school programs to provide a continuum of learning opportunities for students. The curriculum is mapped out to meet the mandated requirements in core areas and pacing guides are developed by teachers. The school seeks to ensure that projects are well matched to subject requirements and students' learning needs.

The introduction of new periodic assessment has improved the data available. Teachers are also developing comprehensive portfolio and expedition project records that identify distinct subject areas. In English language arts, social studies, and science, teachers have developed subject and skill-specific rubrics to inform assessment of students' progress and achievement. The use of rubrics is to be extended to other subject areas. Differentiated instruction is an area for ongoing professional development so teachers can use a range of instructional strategies to fully engage and challenge all students.

The Comprehensive Education Plan identifies priorities to improve teachers' facility to effectively use data. Teachers are positive about such developments and are working well with coaches and school leaders to ensure consistency in approach and to improve the way that data drives instruction, but differentiated practice is not yet established throughout the school. Teachers are held accountable for improving instruction and student progress through the infrastructure of meetings and they speak positively about how collaboration enhances their instructional strategies. Budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions are appropriately made to support the schools' goals and priorities.

Students appreciate the fact that staff know and support them; most students work hard, behave well, and are proud of their school. Students respect their teachers, enjoy collaborating with others and generally work well together. The school is concerned to support the academic and social aspects of students' development and to encourage them to do as well as they can. Students speak about teachers who make their learning enjoyable and challenging, such as the Gowanus Canal Project where students use hands-on scientific methodology and create data to inform their investigations of waterway pollution.

An appropriate range of strategies is used to monitor and encourage attendance, resulting in an average attendance rate of 91.6%. The attendance of some individuals and groups, especially those not taking advantage of the extended day programs to gain credits and preparation for the Regents exams, depresses the overall figure, despite the school's efforts to engage them.

**Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress. The teaching team is fairly stable, but when vacancies occur, teachers are appointed through a process of interviews, which involve demonstration lessons and questioning.

The school has developed programs of professional development clearly linked to whole-school priorities that also promote the staff's professional capacity. Teachers comment that the principal encourages their professional growth whilst holding them appropriately accountable for their responsibilities. Teachers observe practice in other classrooms and they value the feedback and constructive criticism they receive from formal and informal observations by senior staff. A considerable budget supports teachers ability to observe effective practice elsewhere.

There is whole-school commitment and capacity to use data. The school leaders work closely with teachers to provide guidance and support in planning, instructional strategy, and in the use of data. Teachers welcome opportunities for collaborative planning and the support they receive. Team meetings are well focused on student achievement and with senior staff in attendance to steer discussions. The success of professional development is shown in improvements in students' reading progress, which was targeted earlier in the academic year based on analysis of assessment outcomes and action research findings.

The principal is well respected by the whole school community as she models the commitment and drive towards achievement that is expected from others. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis, and parents appreciate timely communications between school and home.

The school has established valuable relationships with a number of outside agencies and organizations in order to support the curriculum and students' personal and academic progress. This is exemplified by its work with the Teachers' College and universities, New York City Performance Assessment Consortium, and the National Network of Expeditionary Learning Schools. Student programs such as the Urban Bush Woman, an after-school theater dance program, and the model United Nations, a curricular enhancement of global studies and social action, effectively complement the mandated curriculum.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The Comprehensive Education Plan sets out goals which are reviewed by the school leaders on a regular basis. Goals in the plan address short- and medium-term priorities for school improvement, and are focused upon student achievement. The implementation of the new system of school-designed assessment is proving supportive in helping the school

assess its effectiveness in meeting goals. The school is now able to make comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and is monitoring the progress of plans and interventions.

The newly instituted periodic assessments are providing effective evidence of student progress and the school leadership is pragmatic in its ability to use the data revealed in order to make strategic changes during the course of the year if necessary.

The collaborative school culture is a positive factor that empowers staff in raising student achievement. The school's leaders have worked with teachers to enable them to use data effectively and translate it into challenging instruction.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Brooklyn School for Collaborative Studies (PS 448)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		X	

<b>Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.</b>	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>		X	
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students*</li> </ul>			X
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>		X	
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.			X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>		X	

\* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

<b>Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.</b>	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.		X	
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.			X
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.		X	
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.			X
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.			X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			X

<b>Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.</b>	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.			X
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X
<b>Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.			X
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.		X	
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X
<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.		X	
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>		X	