



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Brooklyn High School of the Arts**

**High School 656**

**345 Dean Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11217**

**Principal: Robert Finley**

**Dates of review: April 24 - 25, 2007**

**Reviewer: Ken Bryan**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Brooklyn High School of the Arts is a comprehensive arts high school serving 754 students from 9th grade through 12. The school's ethnic composition is 75% Black, 21% Hispanic, 3% White and 1% Asian and others. The proportion of students eligible for Title 1 funding is 36.9%, which is lower than similar schools. There are 45 special education students and 5 English language learners, whose first language is Spanish. The student attendance rate is 87% which is slightly better than similar and City-wide school averages.

Brooklyn High School for the Arts was founded in 2000 and was established as the only high school to offer a comprehensive arts program exclusively to Brooklyn resident students. It was also the first arts high school in the country to offer a preservation arts program. Prospective students are auditioned for places at the school based upon their aptitude in the arts. The school offers performing, fine and preservation arts programs in addition to a full program of academic subjects. The school's four-year graduation rate stands at 86% and it has received recognition from the State Board of Regents as one of New York State's high performing gap closing schools.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The levels of leadership and commitment demonstrated by the dynamic principal are excellent.
- The school's cabinet is a very effective leadership group.
- The teachers know their students through the very effective use of data and the high quality of instruction.
- The school sets very demanding goals for its students and the results in the Regents exams have been consistently high.
- The school's academic and studio strand programs are very challenging, engaging and successful.
- Excellent relationships with a wide range of external services, collaborators and providers, significantly enhance the education provided by the school.
- Budgeting and staffing decisions are based upon the very effective analysis and interpretation of the available data.
- The students are eager to learn, they are self-motivated in their studies and they have an excellent rapport with their peers and with the faculty.
- The school has developed a robust structure to frequently and very rigorously monitor and revise its short and long-term goals.
- The school runs very smoothly, the students are polite and well dressed and the atmosphere is one of pride and respect for learning.

### What the school needs to improve

- Disaggregate data explicitly to determine the relative progress of different groups of learners.
- Expand the school's professional development program so that it meets the needs of all members of staff.
- Broaden curriculum to include modern foreign languages and further opportunities for competitive sports.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a well-developed school.**

Brooklyn High School for the Arts successfully meets the needs of its talented students by combining academic rigor with a well planned and instructed studio arts program. The dynamic and visionary principal and his very effective cabinet have high expectations for the students and faculty. The teachers know their students very well through the very competent use of data and through their supportive relationships. The disciplines within the performing, fine arts and preservation arts are expertly delivered to very talented and well motivated students. The high quality of the many performances and exhibitions is testimony to the dedication and hard work of the students and faculty.

High expectations are intrinsic to the academic programs. Examination success and attendance rates are high and the students are eager to learn. They have an excellent relationship with their peers and with the faculty. The students dress professionally and a business-like atmosphere pervades the hallways, practice rooms and classrooms.

The principal is highly respected by his faculty, the student and the parents. All members of the school community know and respect one another. On this basis, the school has the capacity to continue to go from strength to strength.

#### **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 well developed.**

The school generates a wide range of assessment data which is used effectively to inform student progress. This data has been efficiently collected and analyzed to inform individual student performance and goal setting. The school is proud of its Regents scores and it was awarded the State Education Department Board of Regents' high performing closing gap accolade last year. The analysis of Regents cohort competency data enables the staff to evaluate the progress of students within classes and grades. This is also used to rigorously compare the school with other local high schools as student recruitment is given a high priority. The data provided by the three marking periods within the annual cycle, is analyzed thoroughly to identify trends and to demonstrate achievement. The school rigorously compares year-on-year performance in relation to grades, content areas and with peer horizon schools. This is also an effective tool to make an objective analysis of performance over time and by subject. The compilation of student transcripts is methodical and they are regularly updated. Student performance data is fully integrated and trends are effectively communicated to each learner, teachers and parents. Another example of this rigor is the way in which special education students are tracked effectively through the analysis of the tri-annual data, personal portfolios, reading and mathematics tests, phonic analyses and academic intervention services team conferencing. The consequence of this is the formulation of well targeted individual education intervention

programs involving multi-agency support and the parents. The needs of higher achieving students are well met through the robust use of student data.

The school generates scholastic mark analysis reports to demonstrate the achievement of all students by subject and by grade. These are diligently analyzed as the data drives professional development and the design of instructional programs. The school's cabinet meet daily to analyze current data and trends and to realign goals. This information is efficiently communicated to departmental and grade team meetings. This is a significant strength of the school.

**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.**

The faculty and school leaders work collaboratively and have high expectations. The very effective and proactive cabinet meets daily to review goals in light of data and other information from the faculty and departments. Departmental leaders are set challenging targets for student achievement and the data is tracked continuously and rigorously. The review of data and subsequent goals is therefore fully integrated, authentic and intrinsic. Data from the Regents competency tests is used effectively to inform decisions about individual students' programs and levels of intervention. The guidance counselor effectively coordinates this process using grade counselors to set individualized programs.

The Comprehensive Education Plan is scrutinized and modified frequently and it is regularly updated by all stakeholders. The constituent groups, through the use of data, methodically refine the school's goals. A very good example is the recent introduction of a personal business finance program to augment the studio strand curriculum.

Parents and caregivers are kept very well informed about the progress of their children. There are effective lines of communication with the home. Students, teachers, parents and caregivers share in the target setting process. Different marking periods are able to generate data to inform this process and the parents are mailed results throughout the year. Parents appreciate the excellent personal and academic guidance provided by the school. The school's high expectations are frequently communicated to the parents through the use of newsletters, parent conferences and during the many performances.

The school is very successful in requiring and achieving consistency across the different departments with regard to the setting of goals. This is vigorously driven by the department leaders within the cabinet. The scholastic mark analysis report is an effective comparative tool for determining departmental objectives and the school sees it as a key tool for motivating improvement. Through data analysis, those students in greatest need of improvement are quickly identified and academic intervention programs are provided, such as one-to-one tutoring and extended day and Saturday academy programs.

**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 school aligns itself with the mandated State and City curriculum and it provides an interdisciplinary program for the fine, visual, performing and preservation arts. The introduction of the preservation arts program was a first for a United States high school. There is a well-developed culture amongst the faculty to design student focused programs in terms of scope and sequence to take into account prior knowledge. This is particularly apparent in English language arts curriculum which embraces a creative curriculum structure to include honors and advanced programs.

Teachers feel they are held accountable for improving the instruction and raising achievement. Differentiation in the classrooms is well developed. Teachers plan differentiated tasks very effectively and there are clear examples of interdisciplinary planning. Teachers work very well together to plan the instructional activities. The faculty skillfully analyzes diagnostic, summative and formative assessments to determine individualized programs. Interdisciplinary plans very creatively link the studio arts and academic programs. The school emphasizes the development of the whole child regardless of their aptitude for the arts.

Budgeting decisions take into account the needs of the departments, the faculty and student performance data. An example of this is the procurement of additional technology resources, both for students' learning and teachers' administration and instruction. The strategic management of the school's departmental budget is intrinsically linked to the Comprehensive Education Plan. There is clear evidence of engagement in the classroom. Classes actively stimulate the learners regardless of their levels of achievement and the relationship between the teachers and the students is excellent. Students stated that they can go to many members of the faculty with their problems. The use of formative assessment strategies and the insistence upon very high standards underpins the culture of success

Attendance is given a high priority by the school. Good attendance is celebrated and absence is challenged. There are very rigorous procedures in place to record student attendance and this is fully supported by the parents.

**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.**

Teachers have been selected according to their expertise (arts, academic subject or grade specialty) and on their ability to use data effectively. The principal is careful to select teachers who can challenge and motivate the students and to take into account their holistic development. The vetting process is effective and staff turn-over and absence is low. The principal has high expectations for his faculty both in terms of pedagogic proficiency and its ability to improve student performance.

Staff development is a strong feature of the school. Programs carefully support the needs of the staff through the robust use of data analysis, classroom observations and reviews of curriculum maps. Grade and departmental conferences, held each month, effectively focus upon the school's bottom-line goals, individual strengths and areas for development for grade teachers. Daily cabinet meetings involving the departmental leaders and the guidance counselor frequently modify goals and realign programs according to the available data. The instructional team meets regularly to monitor the quality of instruction and learning. There is a strong sense of collaboration and support in an open and

transparent atmosphere of trust and respect. The increasing use of inter-visitations to enable teachers to share good practice has added to this professional openness. Ideas, methods and resources are frequently shared. However, the planning for professional development has been limited by the region's programming. This means that the school's professional development program is not varied enough to address all teachers' needs.

The role of the principal is crucial. Regular visits to the classrooms and his willingness to let the teachers experiment are key strengths. The principal visits classrooms each day and he has a strong relationship with the faculty, the instructional team, the guidance counselor, the parent coordinator and staff. The teachers continually review and adapt their instructional programs during grade and departmental meetings. Again the cabinet guides the process. The principal is highly respected by all members of the school community and he demonstrates excellent instructional and operational guidance. The school runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The atmosphere in the hallways, classrooms, workshops and performing areas is conducive to learning.

The use of partnerships with outside organizations to support its academic and studio strands is another strong feature. Numerous outside organizations support the schools' programs and these considerably enhance the academic and arts programs, such as with the New Jersey Institute of Technology which enhances both professional development and the delivery of the preservation arts program.

**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 well developed.**

The school frequently reviews its goals and plans. This is an effective and well organized process. Goals are set by the school's cabinet. The Comprehensive Education Plan is written yearly and modifications are made throughout the year by the school leadership team in accordance with data. The detailed and effective Comprehensive Education Plan is seen as a living, working document and it is used as an effective tool for whole school improvement. The school leadership team meets monthly to review the school's progress and alignment of its goals. The cabinet, which includes departmental heads and the guidance counselor, meet each day to review data, goals, the curriculum map and professional development indicators.

Student data is continuously used to inform the school self review process. The school very carefully uses this analysis to adjust the curriculum maps through studying the success of each study unit. The curriculum map, the Comprehensive Education Plan and pupil data are reviewed each June at the beginning of the review cycle when short, medium and long-term plans are set. Plans and goals are continuously modified as a result of the rigorous scrutiny of the scholastic mark analysis, interim assessments, summative assessments and anecdotal information from the teachers. Information gathered from periodic assessments is constantly reviewed in light of individual and school-wide goals. Grade conferences and common preparation times are used very effectively to consider student data and to set further goals for improvement. The school has adopted a very agile and flexible but robust strategy for school self-evaluation.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Brooklyn High School of the Arts (HS 656)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>			<b>X</b>

<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>			<b>X</b>
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>		<b>X</b>	
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>			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>

\* 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.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>

<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