



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Brooklyn Community Arts and Media High School

High School 412

**300 Willoughby Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11205**

Principal: James O'Brien

Dates of review: May 29 - 30, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Christina Lewis

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Brooklyn Community Arts and Media High School is a high school with 220 students from grade 9 through grade 10. The school population comprises 95% Black, 4% Hispanic and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 0.5% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 81%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 70% eligibility.

Brooklyn Community Arts and Media High School opened in 2006 with grade 9 students. In 2007, it moved buildings to the present location that is shared with other schools. In 2008, it will have three grades of students occupying the building.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a clear vision for the future development of the school that is shared with the school community.
- Good use is made of counselors and advisory services to understand and meet the emotional and social needs of students.
- Students are articulate and confident and value the high expectations the school has for their future.
- Data is used well in identifying areas of under-performance and supporting special education students.
- The curriculum has strong focus on arts and media and provides a broad and balanced learning experience.
- Teamwork and collaboration are strong features of the school, which promote a positive learning environment.
- Parents appreciate the accessibility of the staff and the opportunities they have to be involved in their child's general learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Rigorously evaluate the work of the school to ensure consistency of practice and to prepare for the next stage of school improvement.
- Develop a clear strategic plan focused on school improvement with clear targets, timeframes and success criteria.
- Further develop teachers' confidence and skills to provide workshop-based differentiated instruction that fully engages the learner.
- Formalize the goal-setting process so that each grade, subject area and student knows what they are aiming for, and share this with parents.
- Generate data in order to track students' progress and performance in all subject areas.
- Analyze the data to give clear picture of the progress and performance of the different subgroups within the school population.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made some progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Brooklyn Community Arts and Media High School is a proficient school that has made some progress since the last Quality Review. The school now uses and organizes data more efficiently to identify student need. However, the school has yet to fully disaggregate data in order to gain a clear overview of the performance and progress of different sub groups within its population. The principal has a strong vision for the future development of the school that he shares with the school community. Through his accurate self-evaluation he acknowledges that the school has come a long way in its second year and so has set the ground for further developments. These include establishing a clear goal-setting process from whole school, to class, subject, grade and student. Additionally, action plans are not yet formalized to include achievable timeframes and success criteria.

The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum with a strong focus on media and creativity. As a result, students have many opportunities to develop new skills, for example, recording their own music in the school's music lab, or designing and making a product to sell. In more formal English and math classes lessons are planned around workshop, inquiry-based learning. However, this is not yet consistent practice throughout the school. Because of this, some lessons are less engaging, so students become restless and distracted. The use of differentiated activities has yet to become fully integrated into teachers' planning. Higher-achieving students have the opportunity to take the Regents exams in math and science.

A good advisory program ensures constant assistance for students' well-being and academic needs. Guidance counselors support students identified at risk effectively. There is good support for special education students. A clear credit recovery catch-up program, run during the school day or as a summer school, suitably targets under-performing students. For example, the work of the inquiry team highlighted the need for more intensive math teaching, resulting in smaller groups for additional support in math.

Parents appreciate the flow of general information from the school and the accessibility of staff. However, this is not matched by specific goals for individuals, so parents can work with teachers to support their child more effectively. Students enjoy school and value the high expectations the school has for their future. A group of students, who felt they would not have this opportunity at other high schools, said, "This is a great chance for us do well in a small school, and go to college."

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 the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school uses a wide range of assessments to generate data in order to monitor the progress and performance of students. This empowerment school develops "design your own" assessments based on teacher assessments, which closely align with curriculum content. Currently, assessments focus on English language arts and math and have yet to be formalized for other subject areas. State tests and assessments also give a clear indication of strengths and weaknesses in pupil performance. As a result of this, the inquiry team focuses on the identified weakness in math. Through their action research, the team's effective strategies support its target group in improving math skills. Early results indicate that these have had a positive impact on improving students' achievement. Planning for smaller math teaching groups for all students next year results from the team's work. The school provides good support for special education students through collaborative team-teaching classes and other student-support teachers. The aim is to fully integrate these students into mainstream classes by the time they reach grade 12. The small group of English language learners is well supported by an English as a second language teacher. The school has not yet fully disaggregated data to monitor and review the progress of the different sub-groups within its population. It is establishing a measurement of pupil progress over time through internal assessments. As a new school, it does not yet have sufficient hard data to compare itself with other schools, except in attendance.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school rightly identifies its strengths and weakness but has yet to formalize the goal-setting process. Currently the goals for school improvement are part of the Comprehensive Education Plan and are not quantifiable. Goals have yet to be set across grades, subjects and classes. Because of this, teachers are not always sure of their part in bringing about overall change. Students are effectively placed in small advisory groups. The teacher/advisor has the responsibility of monitoring students' performance academically, socially and emotionally through the school. Whilst they identify under-achievement and personal and social issues, they do not set clear specific goals for individual performance. As a result, students are vague about their next steps to achieve their long-term goal of obtaining enough credits to go to college. Advisors effectively collate the information about individual students through the "kid talk" program developed by the school. This allows regular discussion between grade and subject teachers. Students who fail their classes, or do not collect enough credits, are well supported through a comprehensive credit catch-up program that runs during the school day or as a summer school. Small, flexible group programs and individual tutoring provide adequate short-term intervention. These include effective strategies developed by the inquiry team for tackling under achievement in math, as well the programs supporting special education students. Students who are capable, take the Regents

exam in math and science, with classes after school to prepare for these. Consequently, students are confident, articulate and value the high expectations the school has for their future. One student commented, "This school really believes in giving us a way to get to college and helping us improve."

Parents are kept informed of their children's general progress through regular reports, parent conferences and informal contact with advisory teachers. However, they are unsure of their children's goals and what is needed to achieve them. They value the opportunities offered to enable them to be involved in the life of the school. "Night to shine," for example, is an event where students share their work and achievements with the school community. However, some parents feel that the relationships between staff and students are too casual and that the school lacks the academic choices usually associated with pre-college preparatory schools.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school's curriculum is aligned to State requirements. In addition, it offers many opportunities for students to participate in a wide range of activities both within and outside the school day. Students experience success and express themselves through elective courses, including craft, music-making and graphic design. These strongly reflect the purpose of the school to encourage creativity through different forms of media. Classes also enhance the learning opportunities available for students to develop necessary skills for future employment, for example in technology. Successful after-school programs include sport, dance and a publishing club. As a result, students agree, "The school has really tried hard to find things that interest teenagers and make school good."

The school recognizes the importance of actively engaging its lively students in their learning. Much of the school's focus has been on developing teachers' skills and confidence in planning more workshop inquiry-based lessons that include differentiated activities. Although there has been a culture shift, not all lessons are planned this way. Consequently, students are less engaged in these lessons and become restless, so do not make sufficient progress. "Too much teacher talk, not enough doing," summarized a group of students. The school works hard to encourage an informal environment of trust and respect. As a result, students feel supported and are confident and articulate about their aspirations. Because of good strategies in place for monitoring attendance and lateness, including an attendance team responsible for chasing up absentees and making home visits, the attendance rate is improving steadily.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The principal closely monitors the work of each teacher. This results in one-to-one feedback on the quality of teaching and learning. A consultant works alongside teachers

to improve classroom practice. The constructive feedback and modeling means that staff feel a valued part of the team and are determined to do their best for the students. A teacher commented, "The principal makes me reflect on my instruction and that helps me to be a better teacher." Professional development is planned around identified need and school improvement. It includes internal school conferences in addition to external retreats and training. Recent topics comprised differentiated instruction and the work of the advisory team. Regular grade, subject and advisory meetings encourage teachers to work collaboratively and evaluate each other's work. The administration's clear guidelines detail what is expected from staff and how their rooms should look, to ensure a consistent approach throughout the school. An effective mentor program supports new teachers equally well.

The school uses the guidance counselors very effectively in addressing the emotional and social development of the students. The advisory teams refer students identified as at risk. The team of counselors and guidance services arrange intervention and support through outside agencies, if appropriate. They also carry out home visits to support the families of these students. Regular conferences alert staff to issues that may affect students' learning and well-being. A positive code of conduct used consistently throughout the school means that incidents of antisocial behavior are dealt with quickly and fairly. The school has developed strong partnerships within the local community, including opportunities for students to complete an internship with local businesses and organizations. Students are proud of this chance and many of them look forward to "learning about a real job." They also appreciate the opportunities they have to attend open days at colleges, to get a taste of college life. An enthusiastic student commented, "It really makes me want to work hard."

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The principal communicates his very strong vision well to the school community. However, the school has yet to develop an action plan with clear measurable long-term, interim goals and timeframes for school improvement. As a result, the direction of the school lacks clarity and purpose. The principal acknowledges that goal setting for school improvement lacks sufficient formality so is planning this for next year. Areas currently identified for school improvement result from monitoring practice in the classroom, rather than carefully looking at student progress and the bigger picture. The school has also yet to rigorously evaluate the impact of teaching and learning, to ensure consistency and to prepare for the next phase of its development as the student population increases by another grade.

At student level, assessments and diagnostic tools are regularly used to track student performance in math and English. Flexible groupings allow for intervention and support when required, through extra classes before or after school, or extra support during the school day. The advisory team addresses referrals of students who are at continued risk of under-achieving with suggestions of different strategies and more focused interventions. The school is still in the early stages of its development. However, the principal is an effective leader who has already introduced good procedures to ensure the school has the capacity to achieve its vision.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SCHOOL NAME: Brooklyn Community Arts & Media High School | Δ | ▷ | ✓ | + | ◇ |
| Quality Score | | | X | | |

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

| To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . . | Δ | ▷ | ✓ | + | ◇ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level? | | | X | | |
| 1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students? | | | X | | |
| 1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners? | | | X | | |
| 1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school? | | X | | | |
| 1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas? | | X | | | |
| 1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools? | | | X | | |
| 1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students? | | | X | | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 1 | | | X | | |

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

| To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . . | Δ | ▷ | ✓ | + | ◇ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals? | | X | | | |
| 2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement? | | | X | | |
| 2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students? | | X | | | |
| 2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers? | | | X | | |
| 2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve? | | X | | | |
| 2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children? | | | X | | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 2 | | | X | | |

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

| To what extent does the school . . . | Δ | ▷ | ✓ | + | ◇ |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students? | | | X | | |
| 3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day? | | | X | | |
| 3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment? | | X | | | |
| 3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge? | | X | | | |
| 3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students? | | | X | | |
| 3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development? | | | X | | |
| 3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness? | | | X | | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 3 | | | X | | |

| Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student. | | | | | |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| To what extent does the school . . . | Δ | ➤ | ✓ | + | ◇ |
| 4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction? | | | X | | |
| 4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers? | | | X | | |
| 4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment? | | | X | | |
| 4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school? | | | X | | |
| 4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals? | | | X | | |
| 4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents? | | | X | | |
| 4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students? | | | X | | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 4 | | | X | | |

| Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning. | | | | | |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| To what extent do . . . | Δ | ➤ | ✓ | + | ◇ |
| 5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments? | | X | | | |
| 5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments? | | X | | | |
| 5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas? | | | X | | |
| 5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals? | | | X | | |
| 5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes? | | | X | | |
| 5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning? | | X | | | |
| 5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change? | | | | X | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 5 | | | X | | |

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|---|--|
| ◇ | Outstanding |
| + | Well Developed |
| ✓ | Proficient |
| ➤ | Underdeveloped with Proficient Features |
| Δ | Underdeveloped |