



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**The The Brooklyn International High School**

**High School 439**

**49 Flatbush Avenue Extension  
Brooklyn  
NY 11201**

**Principal: Pamela Taranto**

**Dates of review: May 29 - 30, 2008  
Lead Reviewer: Isobel MacNaughtan**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Brooklyn International High School is a high school with 395 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 17.2% Black, 37.5% Hispanic, 13.2% White, and 32.2% Asian and Pacific Islander students. The student body includes 80% English language learners and less than 1% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 93.5%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 100% eligibility.

The Brooklyn International High School shares the building with two other schools. It affiliates with the International Network for Public Schools. All students are new learners of English who had been in the United States for four years or less at the time of admission.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Data from accurate and thoughtful assessment of students' achievement provides teachers with an exceptional understanding of student need.
- Powerful collaborative leadership teams drive the rigorous development of excellent practice with students.
- Teachers have increased the use of rubrics in lessons resulting in independence and confidence in learners.
- The school's creation of a rich curriculum, coupled with its emphasis on depth, gives exceptional support to students to develop skills for life.
- The level of engagement, challenge and progress evident in students in all classrooms is a testament to the quality of teaching and commitment of staff.
- Sophisticated differentiation practice enables all students to achieve highly.
- Instruction improves constantly through teachers' commitment to sharing and using best practices.
- An enriching internship program for grade 11 students has been created with the wide network of partners.
- Academic interventions evolve and refine through meticulous and thoughtful monitoring and evaluation.
- The principal whose vision draws the best out of all those with whom she works gives inspirational, but understated leadership.

### What the school needs to improve

- Further develop the organization of systems to manage data more efficiently and effectively by synthesizing the vast range of valuable data in regular use..
- Use the website, which is currently being developed, to enhance communication with parents.
- Embed current work with "Design Your Own" assessments to improve evaluation of the school's continuous development of the curriculum.

## Part 3: Main Findings

### **Progress made since the last review**

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

### **Overall Evaluation**

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

The Brooklyn International High School excites attention from the education community. This is unsurprising. The school achieves stellar results with its students, all of whom first enrolled as English language learners. Graduation rates for students with this background are well above that of other New York High schools. A recent New York report shows that it is one of the top ten schools performing “against the odds”. A number of factors contribute to the school’s distinctiveness. Routinely teachers of all disciplines teach English and thus English language instruction flows through all aspects of the curriculum.

There is a profound and compassionate thinking which influences the curriculum: the school takes into account the communities from which the students come and understands the fragility of young people who live between two worlds and experience prejudice. An emphasis on service to others, a rich arts program and the development of supportive relationships between students illustrates the school’s commitment to students. Many teachers were Peace Corps workers and come with a significant understanding of other communities. They have a sense of vocation and operate with deep compassion and an unremitting attitude to excellence as the right of the students they serve.

The school organizes classes into heterogeneous groups with different levels of English language acquisition. This makes exceptional demands on its teachers who rise to the challenge by practicing skilful differentiation to drive learning. Carefully considered and fluid groupings, different versions of material, presentation using different medium, interdisciplinary projects and the advanced portfolio systems of the school support and demand of students in equal measure. The distributed leadership structure lends itself to systematic improvement, which develops organically from in-depth evaluation of practice across the board. The school’s rigorous approach to action research has led to a sophisticated academic approach to monitoring and evaluation. The principal demonstrates powerful, albeit unobtrusive, leadership of this complex and excellent institution. Staff join her in creating a high quality of education set within a culture which demonstrates integrity and respect.

Since its last review, the school has increased its quantitative use of data and made greater use of interim goals as part of monitoring procedures. A particular focus has been the continued development of rubrics and the subjection of their use to rigorous evaluation. The inquiry team has undertaken high quality research into the impact of a new rubric for English language arts with five students. The school demonstrates considerable capacity to improve its work and thus has plans to focus on continued work on “Design Your Own” assessment and the website. It has made advances in the range of collection of data but organization of systems to manage data is not fully developed.

## **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 well developed.**

Habitually, the school uses a substantial spectrum of data to inform and evaluate its work in a thoughtful way. A variety of school-created sources, such as progress reports and interim reports coupled with external measures such as success in the regent's examination enables the administration to understand in depth the progress of individuals and all groups. The diversity of ethnic groups leads the school to a sophisticated understanding of the impact of different cultures and backgrounds on learning. Its commitment to excellence is reflected in the way it tracks its progress against other schools. In particular, it is able to compare performance against the other international schools. Staff consider data sources carefully before reaching conclusions. For example, crude disaggregation of data based on ethnic groups has limits for a school with representatives of over forty different nationalities. Because of this, leaders focus specific studies on groups that cause concern. Assessment data, while deepening understanding of the culture, leads to sharply focused interventions.

Teachers, alone and working collaboratively in grade teams, have developed an intellectually rigorous approach to data collection and analysis. Together they use evidence to create classes and groups to maximize differentiated instruction. On a weekly basis, they analyze evidence of progress within cohorts. They have a practice of undertaking stringent action research to evaluate aspects of their work using multiple perspectives and hard data. This academic approach brings depth to the way teachers scrutinize and collect data about progress. They use a wide perspective because so many different factors affect their learners. However, while data collection is broad and well used across the school, management systems and structures are not fully in place to synthesize the sheer quantity of informative and useful data.

**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 well developed.**

A wise and considered approach is taken to improvement planning. The principal insists on a thorough and consistent mode of development believing that "three goals are enough for a school in any one year". The practice of collaboration lies deep in the heart of the school. Grade teams commit to exceptional degrees of collaboration, meeting daily together at lunchtimes along with formally scheduled meetings. Goals arise from detailed analysis of practice and achievement, and feed to the main committees who take forward the school's goals. Systems for sharing goals, moving forward, and monitoring impact are rock solid. A sophisticated action research program enables the school to give in depth consideration to any groups who give concern. As a result, many students who might lack confidence in other settings receive sensitive and well-focused support and progress well.

One of the strongest features of the school is the independence and confidence of the learners, which they demonstrate in every conversation. The school's approach to setting goals is in part responsible for this. Students are clear about their next steps and the

careful and developing use of rubrics supports this process. The portfolio system and the interdisciplinary projects which all students undertake give clear frameworks for improvement and convey consistently high expectations. Students are clear about their own steps for development and there is a sense of developing self-respect because of the demand made upon them. Parents have a high regard for the work of the school and point to exceptional progress in their children's language acquisition. The school develops the best possible relationships with parents recognizing and overcoming as far as possible the barriers to good communication that are inevitable with such a diverse parent cohort. It is creating a website as a useful opportunity to further develop links with parents.

**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 well developed.**

Consistently high quality instruction enables students to progress at levels that outstrip other schools. Underpinning excellent lessons is a curriculum created to support students' holistic development. All students are second language learners aiming to develop competence that will stand up in academic settings. A rich curriculum, including arts and science, enables students to develop complex language skills in context. Students defend their portfolios in a public forum - another example of language evolving within the content of the curriculum. There is a remarkable degree of engagement resulting from skilled differentiation practices. High levels of trust enable students to access help from staff and from peers. A major plank in creating this level of respect is the training of students who challenge and support each other to improve. This system is made more formal in a peer mentoring system where senior students support vulnerable younger students. The result is that many students' performance exceeds expectations, graduation rates are high and students develop the skills to become both independent learners and accomplished team workers.

There is an expectation that learning will be interactive to afford every opportunity for language practice. This leads to dynamic and imaginative lessons, which engross students. The use of technology has inspired students to improve their work. Students describe this way of learning as "addictive" and "supercool". The internship program for grade 11 students carefully considers each individual's needs so that they learn to operate in challenging situations. Learning within the context of the grade 12 service learning project enables students to develop self-respect and to make a difference in their communities. Overall, the joined up approach in this school offers an incredible diversity of learning situations both within classrooms and incrementally across the Grades. As well as accelerating achievement, this richness develops the maturity and confidence of the students. Attendance rates are high, reflecting students' commitment to their studies.

**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 well developed.**

The school has a particular vision and a special force of teachers to take it forward. Parents value the passion with which teachers inspire their students and comment on their "world view". This breadth of experience enables teachers to understand the challenges

facing their students and to develop inclusive practices in their instruction. There are several forums for these committed teachers to improve their professional practice. Grade teams constantly share practice and scrutinize one another's work; annually teams undertake visits to other grades. This leads to excellent thinking when developing curriculum. Staff refer constantly to the skills that will be required "further up the school" and have a detailed knowledge of prior experience. Students benefit from well managed transitions between grades which ensure that pace of learning never falters. The literacy coach facilitates fine work on action research. The theme of intellectual rigor reflects in this as it does in so many aspects of the school's development. All teachers' reflection is based on thoughtful questioning of evidence and leads to successful changes in practice. Their goals are meticulously monitored by collegiate groups and by administration who assure quality through their regular observations of lessons. The professional development committee meets weekly to manage this complex professional process and merge whole school goals successfully with professional development. This results in exceptionally high quality instruction and a constant application to improve practice. .

Productive partnerships with, for example, the International Network for Public Schools enrich staff development. This has been a long running partnership and joint development work and study ensures that staff never become inward looking. The internship program is extremely well developed enabling students to undertake a rich program. This is enabled by networks with and a wide group of partners.

**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 well developed.**

There is a sense of carefully considered evolution in all of the school's developments. The school is successful in what it does and systematically aims for further improvement. Underpinning the school's excellence is a habit of objective and sophisticated evaluation permeating all it does and integrated at all levels into the school's work. Change is only embedded after evaluation at all stages of development. Grade teams monitor progress constantly and discuss and amend instruction to improve student learning. The effectiveness of the curriculum is measured through the process of review of portfolio involving, as it does, a cross section of staff. Revision results after discussion in this forum. The professional development committee also systematically monitors whole school and grade team development through stringent evaluation of outcomes which inform their next steps. Students evaluate their own work and are very clear as to the changes they must make to achieve their goals. Rubrics have been evaluated against their impact on student achievement and have been re-designed to ensure that they truly support student learning. Developments grow incrementally from a systematic evaluation of previous achievements. Working with other international schools, the school is currently building its bank of "Design Your Own" assessments to give further objective means to evaluate the curriculum. Quantative goals have been set and achieved in a number of areas. Examples include a 1% increase in attendance and a 10% increase in pass rates in English Regents this year. The school is successful at meeting its goals.

Underlying all that the school does is its vision for a better world and its understanding of the part which it can play to improve the life chances of its students. It aims for depth of learning, building of community and a strong sense of service. It desires that its students become skilled communicators and creative, critical thinkers able to succeed in their new situation. The principal leads and inspires her community to the highest levels of service.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: The The Brooklyn International High School</b>	△	▷	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>				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 . . .	△	▷	✓	+	◇
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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				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 . . .	△	▷	✓	+	◇
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>				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 . . .	△	▷	✓	+	◇
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>					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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>					X

◇	<b>Outstanding</b>
+	<b>Well Developed</b>
✓	<b>Proficient</b>
➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>