



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Brooklyn School for Collaborative Studies**

**Middle-High School 448**

**610 Henry Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11231**

**Principal: Alyce Barr**

**Dates of review: February 11 - 12, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Bruce Berry**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Brooklyn School for Collaborative Studies is a middle-high school with 597 students from grade 6 through grade 11. The school population comprises 42.7% Black, 38.1% Hispanic, 14.2% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 30% 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 91.6%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal and assistant principals provide good leadership for the change process as the school expands to full high school status.
- There are very effective data systems in place for tracking student progress.
- Teachers used data very well to identify skills in need of improvement to inform their instruction and to plan interventions for students.
- There are excellent support systems for students in greatest need of improvement, who make very good gains in their achievement levels.
- The school has excellent communications with families and fully involves the students in providing progress updates to their parents.
- The broad curriculum and stimulating enrichment programs provide very good engagement and interest for student learning.
- Excellent teamwork and high-quality professional development are creating opportunities for teachers to work collaboratively to enhance their knowledge and skills.
- The caring and respectful culture generated in the school provides a supportive environment for learning.
- There are effective plans and goals for moving the school forward as it grows to full capacity.
- The excellent partnerships the school has developed provide a wide variety of enrichment activities to support students' academic and social development.

### What the school needs to improve

- Enhance the consistency of goal setting at whole school, grade and subject level, particularly in the grades 6 to 8.
- Further develop the school's present initiatives to provide more challenging learning opportunities for higher achieving students.
- Use the school's comprehensive data system to provide more regular monitoring of the progress of the different subgroups in the school.

## 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 principal's and assistant principals' very good leadership is creating the vision and drive for school improvement. The school has developed robust data systems for monitoring the progress of students across the school. It does not yet periodically monitor the progress of different subgroups throughout the school year. Teachers are confident in using data to track student progress and to plan interventions to help the students improve their learning outcomes. Students in need of improvement make very good progress because of the high-quality support they receive. The inquiry team has identified students for their research project, which will focus on improving assessment procedures in math.

Since the last Quality Review, the school has developed very good strategic planning procedures and has improved the teachers' use of periodic assessments. There are very good plans in place, with clear timescales and interim goals, for moving the school forward to full high school status. There is, at present, however, inconsistency in goal setting in grades 6 to 8. The broad and exciting curriculum provides stimulating and interesting learning opportunities for students, although the level of challenge for high achievement students is not yet consistent across the school. The students demonstrate high levels of self-discipline and ownership of their own learning.

### **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.**

The school has robust data systems in place for monitoring the progress of students, classrooms, grades and subjects. The teachers have received excellent training in the use of data systems and are using them to good effect to inform their instruction. The City's system is used for recording marking period grades and the school is piloting the system for entering middle school grades. It also uses the Filemaker data system, which has multiple ways of presenting data to analyze student progress and teacher outcomes effectively. From the school's assessment of reading levels, it was found that many students are far below their expected grade level. As a result, a standardized reading assessment program is now administered three times a year. The acceleration of student reading levels is now a major focus for the school. Special education students receive excellent support and make very good gains in their achievement levels. Close to one third of students have individual education plans. There is excellent regular tracking of the

students' progress against their short and long-term goals. English language learners receive valuable support in line with their identified level of need. Their progress in basic skills development and in reading is monitored regularly. The majority of students acquire proficiency within two years.

The school monitors the performance of ethnic and gender groups through annual test outcomes. There is evidence of excellent progress in English language arts for particular ethnic groups in the school. The school does not yet regularly monitor the progress of the different subgroups in the school during the school year. There is effective tracking of the year-on-year progress as well as the progress of each student, classroom, grade and subject. It identifies similar schools where performance is above that of their own students. They set up visits for teachers to observe and share practice. As an expeditionary learning school, the teachers visit schools in different parts of the country to share practice and learn new ideas for projects.

**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.**

The school sets effective measurable goals for improving student outcomes. These take the form of students being on track, almost on track and off track in respect of promotion to the next grade. The goals are monitored at the end of each marking period and effective intervention programs devised for at-risk students. The goal setting at school, grade and subject level is not yet consistent, particularly in the grades 6 to 8. The school has developed an excellent system for setting learning goals for individual students. The system monitors progress on a five-point scale against a series of learning outcomes for units of work in each subject. Students effectively record a self-assessment of their progress in each learning outcome which is compared with teacher assessment at the end of each unit of work. The system provides students with excellent ownership of their own progress. Students in greatest need of improvement make very good progress through the effective support programs, designed to meet their individual needs. "Push-in", "pull-out" and lunchtime support are used to improve the progress of grades 7 and 8 students who scored a Level 1 in State tests. All 9<sup>th</sup> grade and select other students have academic intervention services on four days each week until they reach a marking grade score of 85 or higher.

The school goals are shared with all members of the school community through newsletters, parents' association and leadership group meetings. Each subject area makes a valuable presentation on their curriculum goals for the year to the parents association. The principal negotiates annual goals with teachers, which are linked to the whole school goals. The excellent communication systems in the school give high-quality information to the parents in the form of newsletters, report cards and progress reports. In readiness for parent and teacher conferences, the students prepare a document outlining their strengths and areas for improvement. The students then make the presentation to their parents during the conference. This exceptional practice is providing students with a very high degree of ownership of their education. The school community shares very high expectations of student achievement and graduation. The parents speak in glowing terms of the care and devotion the teachers demonstrate in encouraging students to improve their achievement. There are many excellent activities where parents and students can work as education partners. For example, some students built earthquake-proof model

buildings. At an evening event the parents and the students took part in a “night of destruction”, when the buildings are tested using an earthquake simulation machine.

**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.**

The school provides a broad curriculum and a range of stimulating enrichment programs to engage and interest students in their learning. In each grade, the students take part in an exciting cross-curricular learning expedition project. Reading is now a major focus of the school in order to accelerate students’ ability in reading and comprehension. The grade 11 curriculum includes an internship program, where students go on work experience to agencies and industries in the city. In science, more hands-on activities were introduced in response to the outcomes of a survey completed by the students. These projects include building mousetrap cars, earthquake-proof model buildings, bottle rockets and the dissection of cells. All students take an exciting range of arts subjects, which include drawing, music and drama. There are other stimulating after-school enrichment programs for the students, which include music, band, drama, visual arts, computer programming design and many other activities.

The teachers provide a range of interesting activities that serve the different learning styles and the specific needs of students. They use data effectively to identify specific skills in need of improvement and plan their instruction and interventions in line with the students’ identified learning needs. The school has identified the need to provide honors extension work for the higher achieving students. At present, there is inconsistency in the effectiveness of this program.

The principal uses budgeting, staffing and scheduling effectively to support the curriculum and instruction. Lead teachers are now in place to support the work of each subject area. The identification of reading as a major priority has led to the creation of classroom libraries with books matched to students’ levels and interests. The hiring of two extra guidance counselors has led to a dramatic downturn in suspensions. There is a wonderful caring and respectful culture in the school. This is created through the high levels of self-discipline shown by the students, who have real ownership in their own education. The high attendance level is further testimony to the value the students place on their education and their interest in learning..

**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 principal and assistant principals provide good support for teaching and learning through their regular classroom walkthroughs. Constructive feedback is always given in conversation with the teacher or in writing. The senior leaders give valuable coaching for the teachers where areas for improving their practice are identified. The extensive training programs for teachers provide them with excellent opportunities for extending their knowledge and skills. The training is based on teachers’ individual identified learning needs as agreed in a meeting with senior leaders to establish each teacher’s goals. All the teachers have an opportunity to attend a national expeditionary learning conference to help them plan the content and activities for their project. Other opportunities for

extending their knowledge include the use of smart boards, the analysis of data, problem solving, reading and other focus areas.

The teachers work extremely well in teams to provide consistency in the planning of the curriculum and instruction. Lead teachers meet regularly to provide an effective, coordinated approach across grades and subjects. Grade level teams meet each week to review t data analysis and to plan the curriculum and instruction. They hold very effective “kid talk” sessions, which focus on a small number of at-risk students. They produce action plans and programs of intervention to enable students to improve their achievement levels. The teachers have excellent opportunities to take part in inter-visitations within the school and to visit schools in the expeditionary learning network. New teachers receive valuable support from the lead teacher for their subject or grade. The support includes observation of instruction, constructive feedback and common planning.

There are very strong guidance systems in the school to support students’ academic and personal development. The personal development curriculum includes a wide range of topics, including health education, peer pressure, HIV AIDS and academic advice in respect of graduation requirements. The students demonstrate very high levels of self-discipline and take ownership of their own learning. There are clear plans and procedures in place. They are understood by all and provide the framework for creating the highly caring and respectful culture, which is in evidence throughout school. The school has generated a wide range of highly effective partnerships, which provide enrichment activities for the students. These include community service, arts activities, after school programs, internships and many other programs of interest for the students.

**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.**

The school has effective plans and goals for improving student and teacher outcomes. The plans are well structured and have clear time scales for monitoring the progress made against interim goals. The school is a well-structured community, with clearly defined roles, responsibilities and accountabilities. The plans and goals are further strengthened by the one-to-one sessions each teacher has with the principal to set their individual goals for the year.

The teachers make very good use of their own periodic assessments to identify specific areas and skills in need of further improvement. This information is then used collaboratively to immediately adjust the curriculum, instruction, and plan interventions for individual and groups of students. Senior leaders constantly review the analysis of the outcomes of data to make strategic decisions, which impact on student learning. For example, reading became a priority throughout the school when the data identified that many students were reading below their grade level.

There is an extremely effective and collaborative approach to reviewing the impact of the curriculum and instruction in planning for the year ahead. Teachers are fully involved in developing curriculum maps and pacing calendars for each academic year. They also work together effectively in planning the cross curricular expeditionary learning projects for each grade. There is a clear vision, which is well supported by the plans and goals, for improving student achievement, with graduation as the goal for all students.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME:</b> <b>Brooklyn School for Collaborative Studies (K448)</b>	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
<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 . . .	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	
<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 . . .	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	
<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 . . .	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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				X	

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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>					<b>X</b>

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent do . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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>					<b>X</b>

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