



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Brownsville Academy High School

High School 568

**1150 East New York Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11212**

Principal: Joanne Nabors

Dates of review: April 10 - 11, 2008

Lead Reviewer: David Glick

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Brownsville Academy High School is a high school with 257 students from grade 10 through grade 12. The school population comprises 84% Black, 14% Hispanic and 1% White students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 - 2007 was 67.0%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 66% eligibility.

The current principal founded the school in 2004 as the first Diploma Plus School in the City. Although the principal plans to retire in the summer, she has skillfully planned the transition. Her intended successor has been an assistant principal in the school and is currently working there as a principal intern.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The pervasive shared vision encapsulated in the school slogan, “We are the Best!” creates a cheerful culture of success throughout the school.
- An exceptionally caring environment and a comprehensive security presence provide a safe haven for students.
- By tapping into individual passions of both teachers and students, the school motivates all individuals to achieve at high levels.
- Teachers and teams effectively integrate quantitative data with qualitative information to form complete pictures of individual students.
- Public displays and high-stakes assessments motivate students to excel while celebrating student achievements.
- The much-loved and highly respected principal fosters extraordinary dedication among staff and students.
- Data systems and sophisticated analyses allow the schools to track progress and predict achievement for individual students.
- A thorough interview and orientation process engages students to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Comprehensive parent outreach systems effectively increase parent participation in their students’ learning and in the school.
- Multiple staff teams work flexibly and collaboratively to create support systems that maximize students’ opportunities for success.

What the school needs to improve

- Consistently apply the data processes developed by the inquiry team and math department to English language arts and other departments.
- Analyze data by demographic groups and other groups of interest to the school in order to identify and address possible trends and gaps.
- Ensure that all goals and interim goals have designated timeframes against which to monitor progress and make timely adjustments.
- Expand the quantity and types of information shared with parents to inform them more thoroughly of the school’s goals.
- Pursue the drive to raise attendance and reduce tardiness.

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.

Brownsville Academy High School immediately strikes the visitor with student artwork and Honor Roll celebrations in the entranceway. Banners outside and inside the school proclaim, "We are the Best!" At Brownsville, this is not a shallow, forgotten slogan. It is an oft-repeated driving force aiming towards what the principal calls a self-fulfilling prophecy. The dynamic principal laces every document and announcement with the phrase, along with her unique brand of humor and enthusiasm to create a loyal, dedicated and effective staff. This enthusiasm spreads to all staff members, students and parents, resulting in a safe haven full of caring that focuses on the personal and academic growth of the school's students.

The school masterfully combines quantitative data with qualitative information to provide a complete picture of each young adult in their care. A variety of flexible and collaborative subcommittees in the staffing structure enable all staff to share information in a timely way and maximize student opportunities. The inquiry team and math department provide impressive analyses of school and department progress so that individual students are tracked effectively. A curriculum map also guides the math department's work. The school has not yet applied the techniques to all departments or trained all staff in their use, and this approach to data is not yet systemic.

Students typically come to the school after dropping out or being expelled from another high school. A comprehensive interview and orientation process identifies each student's strengths and preferences. The school encourages students to explore and expand upon these interests as they take responsibility for their own learning. Students grow proud of their accomplishments and unique skills. Likewise, the administration encourages teachers to follow their interests, which has led to the creation of new courses and unique projects.

The parent coordinator, who was new at the time of the last review, has made great strides in engaging parents. A creative array of orientations, workshops, trips and publications have increased parent involvement significantly. Although attendance is still too low, new systems allow for timely response to the tardiness or attendance problems that arise. The school maintains additional information about school progress and goal setting that it does not always share with the parents.

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 uses a wide variety of paper and electronic tools to track student progress. The "Plan for Success" identifies progress in credit accumulation and Regents exams so that students are consistently aware of their progress toward graduation requirements. Classroom level data aligns student work with competencies and the New York State standards. The school's record-keeping system provides continually updated online information to students and parents so that they have a thorough understanding of progress towards goals. The school has designed all of these systems thoughtfully to help students take responsibility for their own learning.

The pupil personnel team uses a case study approach to combine quantitative data and anecdotal information that provide a detailed profile of each student. The school collects all sorts of background information on students, including academic background, family situations and, where necessary, gang affiliation. As a result, the school knows its students extraordinarily well and can help them respond to their life's challenges.

In addition to the attention given to all students, the school's small number of special education students and English language learners receive services through targeted programs. A dedicated leadership group for special education students helps deliver and track the individual education plan mandated services while integrating them thoroughly into the school. The school has access to data about gender and ethnic groups. Because of the school's small size, homogeneity, and the focus on individual students, it does too little analysis of traditional demographic groups. As a result, the school has an insufficient understanding of trends that may exist.

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.

Among the staff, constant communication and multiple collaborative processes continually establish and refine individual student goals. Small class sizes and multiple avenues of support help create a laser-like focus on the academic and personal growth of every student. Although the school does not share with parents all possible information on whole-school goals, the pervasive focus on being the best regularly communicates the highest of expectations to all students and parents. The school consistently follows through on those high expectations with firm yet flexible systems that do not allow students to fall through the cracks.

Progress reports, portfolios, the Plan for Success and electronic tools provide multiple avenues for two-way communication with parents. Classrooms include posters of checklists tracking student progress on projects or class portfolios such as the Math Manual. Frequent phone calls from teachers and administrators to home keep students

on track and parents informed. When coming to this school, parents are pleasantly surprised that the teachers frequently call with good news about their student or just to check in. The school documents all phone calls and parent meetings with a parent contact log. As a result, parents are more involved in the school and feel like appreciated participants in their child's education.

The parent coordinator's efforts over the past year have also contributed significantly to parent participation. Jazz Night and other social events bring parents to the school where the staff can informally build relationships and share information in a non-threatening environment. At a school retreat, parents give presentations and lead discussions about different aspects of parenting and educational processes. An extraordinary relationship results between the school and the attending 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.

The school's curriculum is incredibly diverse, especially for such a small school. When a student or teacher identifies a particular passion, they are encouraged to follow it enthusiastically. The result is that teachers and students themselves bring new curriculum ideas to the school. When the principal went to Kemet (Egypt), she came back with interdisciplinary project ideas in which all leadership teams participated. The products now form a permanent museum-like display that focuses on Kemet's African heritage. Comprehensive arts, dance and music programs also enhance the curriculum, which keep students excited and engaged. Teachers consistently engage students through individualized work, interdisciplinary projects, high stakes demonstrations and displays of student work. The school makes every effort ensure teachers connect these projects to students' backgrounds or current lives. Teachers integrate history into science and math and are always looking for culturally relevant examples and role models. As a result, students are consistently engaged by seeing a larger picture of connected subjects and relevant content. The school carefully focuses its budget on the greatest needs of the students. Very small class sizes and a large counseling staff ensure that all students have meaningful, trusting relationships with multiple adults at the school. An electronic attendance system provides accurate, up-to-date information, which the administration and staff use to respond immediately to attendance and tardiness issues. Although attendance is still not high enough, these targeted initiatives have increased student attendance by ensuring that many adults are aware of each student's level of participation in the school. One student in the school listed eleven adults with whom he believes he has close relationships that help him stay in school.

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 culture of empowering learners to be responsible for their own growth extends to teachers' professional development. The school expects each teacher to continually

update his or her knowledge base and instructional skills. Common planning time, classroom observations and teacher teams provide teachers with opportunities to learn from each other. As a result, the school creates a dedicated community of learners that keeps the school vibrant. A team approach helps all members of the school community induct new teachers into the school very effectively. Even students participate on the hiring committee. Once hired, the new teachers often take on immediate leadership roles in order to familiarize them with all aspects of the school functions.

An impressive number of partnerships assist students in achieving their goals and completing internships. This includes colleges, social service organizations, churches, community planning organizations, theater organizations, and even a fraternity and sorority. If a student needs help with a particular project or passion, the school will find an organization that can help. As a result, students develop richer projects and are more connected to their community. The school addresses behavior concerns before they happen with a wide array of counseling and support services. The principal, two assistant principals, five counselors, two social workers and an intervention specialist all work closely together to monitor student moods, family situations and other challenges in students' lives. Monitors in stairwells assist security officers to minimize the opportunity for misbehavior. Students and teachers feel safe. Serious behavior incidents are rare.

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 principal's crystal-clear vision drives every program in the school. "We are the Best!" means that each student is the best, and that the school will do everything it can to help each student achieve their highest potential in school and after graduation. Teachers, parents and students all understand that vision.

The inquiry team and the data specialist engage in sophisticated analyses that help the school thoroughly understand various trends in identified areas and set school goals extremely effectively. For example, one such analysis measured the relationship between attendance and credit accumulation. The school acknowledged a "honeymoon" period when students first enter the school and quickly complete credits. They also recognized a group of students who attend school, but complete few credits, particularly as they approach graduation. By enhancing support services as the honeymoon period ends as well as the drop-off at the end of a student's career, the school aims to increase course completion rates. The school has not yet identified all possible trends.

School goals include increases in attendance as well as Regents passing rates. Although the school does not consistently establish time frames for such goals, teachers effectively use periodic assessments to track benchmark data against competencies and standards in all classes. The school is able to use that data to predict who will pass which tests when, and when a student is expected to graduate. These concrete goals motivate students effectively.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Brownsville Academy	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	

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