



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Brooklyn High School of the Arts

High School 656

**345 Dean Street
Brooklyn
NY 11217**

Principal: Robert Finley

Dates of review: May 5 - 6, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Sue Alton

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Brooklyn High School of the Arts is a high school with 521 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 75% Black, 21% Hispanic, 2% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 0.7% English language learners and 7.0% special education students. Boys account for 40% of the students enrolled and girls account for 60%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 86.4%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Students are selected on admission for their potential in the arts. The building is shared with two other schools and this has resulted in the loss of the school library and the necessity to share two of the science labs with these schools.

The current principal is leaving at the end of this semester.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is very well respected by students, parents and teachers.
- The creative arts program provides excellent opportunities for students to develop their artistic talents.
- The school provides a range of good information to students and parents about individual goals, progress and what students need to do to improve.
- Parents feel welcome and appreciate the good range of information they receive about their children's progress.
- The school has high expectations for students which it communicates effectively.
- Relationships are excellent and students feel safe, are motivated, enjoy learning and behave well.
- The guidance department works effectively as a team to plan and evaluate support for students.
- There are good systems in place to identify, track and support students where there are attendance concerns.
- The school runs smoothly and there is a supportive environment which is conducive to learning.
- Partnerships with outside organizations provide good additional learning opportunities.

What the school needs to improve

- Plan the school's future direction and vision and the processes and systems required for this to be successful, including interim goal setting.
- Strengthen distributed leadership through implementing strategic, rigorous systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning.
- Ensure all teachers use data to plan differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students and to engage them actively in their learning.
- Expand systems to disaggregate data to determine explicitly the progress of different ethnic groups.
- Ensure that budgetary decisions support the school's academic goals and are made strategically using data.
- Develop a strategic, planned, carefully evaluated approach to professional development, based on school priorities and staff needs.

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 High provides a high quality arts program, which students say motivates them to learn in other curriculum areas. Student achievement in the arts is very good. One student observed, “The school offers a community where students with unique abilities and talents can come together.” The school runs smoothly, relationships are very good, and students behave very well. They trust and respect their teachers and appreciate the way they give their time freely to help them. Students, parents and staff have great respect and admiration for the principal. One parent said, “He’s everywhere! He supports us as parents. He’s like a father and a mentor and role model for our children.” Communication with parents is good and students are well supported by their personal guidance counselors and feel safe in school. However, there is no strategic plan for the future direction of the school and monitoring and evaluation systems are still developing. Data is not used consistently or strategically by administration, cabinet and teachers to inform planning and decision making, for example budgetary and professional development decisions.

The inquiry team has identified a group of special education students whose progress in global history and US history Regents is slow. Analysis shows a weakness in writing during the examination. To address this, eight students have been targeted for support, which involves team teaching from an English language arts teacher to focus on the writing and a social studies teacher focuses on the history content. Already, the targeted students are showing improvement.

Since the last review, the school has begun to disaggregate data to identify any differences in the achievement of boys and girls, although other groups have not yet been analyzed in this way. The curriculum now includes opportunities for sport and inter-school competitions. A log of professional development is maintained and staff are encouraged to identify their own development needs. Professional development and its impact on instruction is not, however, strategically planned or evaluated systematically.

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.

Administration, cabinet and teachers use a wide range of data, including Regents scores, informal assessments and information from regular marking periods. They use this information to identify and track the performance and progress of individual students, classes, grades, special education students and English language learners. Staff use data to target intervention strategies and support. The school has begun to analyze the achievement and progress of different groups. Through analyzing data, as well as anecdotal evidence, it was observed that girls outperform boys. To address this the school appointed a male parent-coordinator to work with targeted boys, in liaison with guidance counselors. At class and cohort level, staff discuss the impact of this program on students. However, as yet, there is no formal evaluation of this support strategy.

Administration and cabinet also compare current with past performance to support planning. The school compares its achievement with similar schools and this has led to action to improve attendance, and to the inquiry team's work to improve achievement in US history. Student work shows that this intervention has been successful and the Regents will provide the final evidence. In response to this analysis the school has revised the sequencing of courses for grade 9 students, placing the 2 year global history program before the US history program to provide more background in the subject. A data programmer provides teachers with the data they need and all teachers have been trained in data use. More recently, four teachers have received Acuity training which they have turned key to prepare for this semester's introduction of the program.

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.

Administration and cabinet work collaboratively to set measurable long-term goals at whole school level, based on analysis of data. Although progress is tracked towards the long-term goals, interim goals are not set. Where students are a particular focus data is used to plan intervention, for example those special education students who are the focus of the inquiry team. An analysis of student work by the inquiry team shows that this program has been successful for most students. However, the school has not yet considered how to disseminate and use this project to support future programs for students experiencing similar difficulties. The school targets intervention and support to those identified as in need of support as well as identifying those higher achieving students who may benefit from advanced programs. However, the impact of these interventions is not always formally evaluated to assist future planning.

There are high expectations of students in terms of behavior, dress and achievement. Students and parents speak with pride of the high achievement in the arts, which they attribute to the school's high expectations and talented teachers. Students and their parents are made aware of their long-term goals. Measurable interim goals are not identified to provide students with an understanding of what they need to do to improve. However, students say that the results of assessments keep them informed about whether they are on track to achieve their long-term goals. Parents value the accessibility of the principal and the support that he and his staff offer. Parents appreciate opportunities to share information about their children as well as the varied range of regular useful information they receive about their children's progress through

formal and informal meetings, reports, phone calls, informal conversations and regular contact with guidance counselors.

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 mandatory curriculum is adapted to the particular needs of this creative arts school, although the principal has identified it is in need of further revision to meet current needs. The creative arts program provides excellent opportunities for students to develop their artistic talents. One student commented, “We all have a special talent and our own art brings us together.” Students display exceptional talents in choral, band and dance. Art work displayed around the school shows very high standards. Spanish has been introduced into the curriculum, and parents would like further language opportunities. Sporting activities include soccer, basketball and volleyball and students enjoy being involved in inter-school competitions. Activities outside school effectively support learning and all who attended Saturday school passed their Regents examination. Relationships across the school are excellent. Students say they enjoy lessons and value the skills and approachability of their teachers. Students are confident to approach staff if they have a problem. Good and effective systems are in place to support the continuing improvement in attendance.

Although teachers use data to set targets for students, it is not clear how this information is used in lessons to plan differentiated instruction to meet individual and group needs. In many lessons, particularly in the core curriculum, expectations and activities are the same for all students. In these lessons, opportunities to debate and discuss are limited, students are compliant and the lessons are very teacher directed.

Administration and cabinet frequently refer to budgetary constraints. Despite this, data is not always used to support decisions and to prioritize spending, with a focus on student achievement and whole school priorities. Data informed the decision to appoint the parent coordinator to support improving boys’ achievement, but the appointment of an assistant principal for security was less strategic.

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.

An assistant principal formally observes classroom teaching and the principal carries out frequent walk throughs. Feedback includes areas for development and support, including peer mentoring. A retrospective diary of professional development is maintained. However, there is no process to track the impact of training on instruction and no strategic plan for professional development based on school goals or an analysis of teacher need. The lack of a rigorous process, involving a range of leaders, to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching means that the impact of professional development on the quality of instruction is varied. Teachers value opportunities to meet, plan and share effective practice, as well as opportunities to observe each other’s instruction

which happens frequently in grade 9. However, in other grades, little time is allowed for these meetings, limiting opportunities for teachers to reflect, share good practice and learn from each other.

Youth development and guidance is very well coordinated and every student has their own guidance counselor. Students are confident to approach their counselor at any time and value the help they receive on both academic and personal issues. The guidance department meets regularly and works effectively as a team, planning and evaluating support for students. Team members know students and families well and communicate effectively with them. Partnerships with outside organizations enhance the curriculum and provide very good opportunities and experiences for students, including opportunities to learn about marketing and working with professional artists.

The school runs smoothly and behavior is very good. Security has a very high profile, so parents have confidence in the safe environment. Students are very articulate and enjoy learning, particularly in the arts. They would like to have more opportunities to discuss their ideas and concerns through a student government, "Then we'd understand why some decisions are made, and we'd have an outlet and our voice would be heard."

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

Whole school planning and plans for individual students do not include interim goals. The Comprehensive Education Plan is being revised. In the meantime, the three goals and objectives from the principal's performance review are the current goals for the school. While the original Comprehensive Education Plan includes interim measurable goals, the current plan does not. This restricts the effectiveness of any monitoring processes to evaluate the effectiveness of plans and interventions. Teachers are held accountable through the progress individual students make against long-term goals. This is discussed with the assistant principal and is an agenda item at grade meetings. However, this process does not include setting objectively measurable interim goals or timeframes for meeting them. Teachers and faculty use interim formal and informal assessments to track student progress towards their long-term goals and to target and plan interventions and support as necessary. Administration and cabinet monitor this process to ensure that the school is on track to achieve long-term goals. However, this process is not formalized to enable it to support future planning effectively.

Currently, strategic planning does not sufficiently take into account the long-term vision and direction for the school and the systems and actions which are necessary for this to happen. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation processes to support future goal setting and planning are not well established. The principal is developing a distributive approach to leadership, but this is not yet embedded. Other leaders do not always have a strategic overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and its future direction and this restricts planning for improvement. With the retirement of the principal at the end of this semester, these are important considerations for the new principal.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Brooklyn Community High School of the Arts	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