



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Brooklyn Studio Secondary School

Middle - High School 690

8310 21 Avenue

Brooklyn

NY 11214

Principal: Martin C. Fiasconaro

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Brooklyn Studio Secondary School is a middle and high school with 828 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 15% Black, 15% Hispanic, 61% White, and 9% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 23% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 -2007 was 86.3%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a clear vision for continuous improvement which other members of the school community share.
- The inclusive nature of the school provides an excellent social setting in which all can succeed.
- The school collects and uses a wide range of data to obtain a clear view of student progress.
- The teachers know the students well and the students appreciate the excellent personal and academic support that they receive.
- The support for students identified as having special needs is excellent.
- The school senior staff work as a team and act as critical friends to each other.
- The classrooms provide an engaging challenging environment that facilitates good learning.
- The common planning time allows teachers time to talk to each other, share expertise and thus improve their instructional skills.
- The frequent team teaching approach enables the sharing of good instructional skills and gives continuity of teaching for the students.
- The school reinforces the concept of a learning community by ensuring all staff with a responsibility role also teach.

What the school needs to improve

- Set interim measurable goals with suitable time periods leading to the final goal.
- Closely monitor and improve attendance rates for grades 9 through 10.
- Extend the range of honor classes and build up a bank of extension activities for the higher ability students.
- Extend the range of electives in physical education to compensate for the restrictive facilities.

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 Studio Secondary School is comparatively unusual in the New York City education system as not only is it a combined middle and high school but also integrates special education students into all classes. This provides an excellent social setting where all students can thrive. The principal's vision, strongly supported by the leadership team, is instrumental in leading the school, constantly improving its performance and being a place where all the students can flourish socially and academically. The graduation rates for all students are at City levels with many special education students obtaining a regent or regular diploma rather than an individual education plan diploma. The school staff and many students share the principal's vision. The school collects a good and wide range of data about how the students are performing. It uses this to monitor carefully the students' progress.

The school recognizes that the monitoring of goals is stronger for individuals and classrooms than at whole school level. Using the Comprehensive Education Plan the school sets clear goals for the year and reviews them at frequent intervals but does not use formal interim goals or time plans when monitoring the progress towards achieving them. Analysis of data identified number of trends including black students falling behind in grade 9. Low attendance has been identified as one of the contributory factors and the school is looking at strategies to address this.

The calm atmosphere within the school along with engaging and challenging instruction contributes to good learning. The policy of team teaching improves the instructional skills of teachers as they are constantly observing and learning from each other. Effective team teaching and the high quality of differentiation in the classroom provide very good support for the students and they make good progress. Special education students are fully included in all aspects of the school and receive excellent support from the academic intervention services. Students of all abilities value this inclusive approach to learning and view it as very good feature of the school. Teachers and support staff give freely of their time in encouraging and supporting the students in their learning. This is well developed but the school has insufficient resources to extend higher ability students.

Limited space means that teachers only have a workspace in the principal's office leading to many informal discussions and a sharing of expertise. Teachers use these discussions to improve their instructional and class management skills. However, the space for physical education is very restrictive and students have only a small choice of electives compared to most high schools.

Improvement since the last inspection has been good when only two areas of need were identified. The school has improved its space by building a greenhouse for a vocational horticultural course. Small resource spaces now have dual use for small group work and the new computer resources are being well used.

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 collects a wide range of formal and informal data that it analyzes well to set goals and identify specific areas of intervention. The school assesses not only how different classes are performing but also specific groups within those classes, to check very effectively that the inclusive nature of the school is successful. They have a relatively small number of English language learners. In order that the progress of these students is monitored as closely as possible, the English as a second language specialist attends the Saturday school, to monitor progress in this good supportive additional time. Different data systems in middle and high school make it difficult to make comparisons with similar schools. The school has two separate progress cards as a result of these systems. The school compares itself to schools of a similar size and social mix in the two categories which provides an accurate reflection of its performance. Information gained from these comparisons is used well to focus on any areas identified as in need of improvement. The teachers receive good training and support to understand how to use data. Training includes the use of specific school data. Content area staff meet to look at their own data in more detail and how to effectively respond to the resulting analysis. The recent math predictive tests included topics not yet studied by the students. The school is therefore extracting the relevant data and analyzing the responses in areas covered to give a more accurate view of current needs of the students. Their initial analysis by gender did not indicate a significant difference and recently they have been less consistent in continuing to analyze those groups. However, they have provided more suitable reading material to stimulate the interest of boys who were identified as under performing.

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 strength of the school is its collaborative work. Overall, school goals are set for the year based on the evaluation of data available in the school. The school has an executive Comprehensive Education Plan that is a working document and is distributed to all associated with the school. Teachers have a weekly staff meeting when the updates to this are considered. However, the school does not set a more specific time plan for reaching the goals. When considering groups in greatest need of improvement, or groups identified as requiring a particular focus, the plans are more specific. This contributes to the excellent progress made by those students. One parent said, "I am actually hopeful that my daughter might graduate with a regular, as opposed to an individual education plan, diploma. If she does not achieve that goal, I know that we all gave her everything possible to that end". A grade 12 student also speaks of the support and encouragement she has received to complete courses so that she can graduate with the rest of her peers. The school shares with all students and parents its high expectations for success. The general students give testimony to being encouraged to work for the advanced Regents diploma. The special education students study the same curriculum as the general education students rather than the limited curriculum that would lead to an individual plan diploma. When considering improving the credit accumulation using school assessments the school is careful to maintain high standards and not compromise them. The students receive six report cards a year with an academic alert at three weeks. In this

way, students and parents are well aware of current progress. Collaboration between parents and the school is seen as vital to students' success. Where a student is identified as having areas of concern a joint school parent meeting takes place to discuss and share ideas of how address the problem and put effective strategies of support in place.

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 inclusive nature of this school is excellent. Students of all abilities and their parents give testimony to how this gives the school a special character and helps to develop them as understanding young people. They make friends with students that under normal circumstances they may not meet. Team teaching is the norm so there is good general support for students who need it, with additional very good individualized support when required. A consequence of the team teaching is that teachers learn from each other on a regular basis and so improve their own instructional skills. There is also continuity if staff are absent as a substitute teacher is not required. Teachers teach in both the middle and high schools giving them a wider experience and increased continuity for the students. The support staff provides very good individualized support.

The curriculum is extensive. The school is a magnet school for dance and creative writing so all students benefit from this. There is a wide range of good visits to support learning and a range of community voluntary service options have a positive impact on the personal skills of students. Although the curriculum is well developed, the restrictive physical education facilities mean that the electives within this are limited for the physical education students and the principle of encouraging personal fitness for all is difficult. Instruction engages the students so that good learning takes place. The robotics program is encouraging students with lower writing skills to use more literacy skills in a different setting. Because of the inclusive nature of the classes and the desire to be successful in this, the teachers have developed good skills in differentiation which enables students to follow parallel courses in the same classroom. The ability to meet the needs of all students is well developed and higher ability students have a range of extra courses available to them, however the number of extension activities is limited. Attendance overall is satisfactory but there are variations between the two sections of the school, and between grades. Students in grades 9 and 10 have a lower attendance rate than others. The school places a high degree of importance to attendance linking it closely with graduation rates. It recognizes the need to improve the attendance in key years to prevent students falling behind with their study.

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.

There are regular and frequent formal and informal observations of instruction which keep the principal informed about staff needs and the overall quality of instruction. Senior members of staff walk through the school on a daily basis observing general or specific areas. The open nature of the school and the team teaching climate means that the students accept these staff joining in the instruction as the norm. The team teaching approach means teachers constantly observe each other teach, learn from each other and adapt their own instructional styles to incorporate the best that they see. Teachers new to

the profession or new to the school feel a little intimidated by this at first but soon recognize its value and welcome it. Teachers meet together at least weekly and this results in good planning and improved instruction. One of the advantages of limited space is that the workspace for teachers is a section of the principal's office. This results in many informal conversations and discussions taking place that benefit staff new to teaching or to the school. They feel supported by the leaders of the school.

The school provides good professional development which impacts positively on classroom practice. There are a range of one to one sessions with teachers, which may be a follow up to an observation or address issues raised by the teacher themselves. The school provides group and whole school sessions on areas identified as needing additional training and teachers go to off-site locations to attend lectures and courses of interest to the school in general. When teachers go off-site they bring back into the school what they have learnt, sharing the information and ideas with other teachers. All of these contribute to an improved skill in instruction and assist the school in striving for raised performance. The school emphasizes the culture of the school as a learning environment by the fact that as many as possible members of staff teach. The deans, guidance counselors, assistant principals and principal all share in classroom instruction. This builds up the understanding of a learning community and ensures the students see the working of the school as a whole.

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 has a clear vision of the school as an inclusive community. The cabinet works very closely with him to achieve this and they constantly challenge each other about decisions and the way they can most effectively provide for the students in their care. They work towards a system that is self-maintaining, is constantly evaluating itself and is prepared to change for the better. Although the school sets whole school based goals for the year and reviews them frequently, it does not set formal interim goals with a fixed timescale in order to measure the progress made towards these goals.

At classroom and teacher level there is a much more structured program to check on progress made, with a review of what has been successful and subsequent relevant adjustments made to achieve the next step. When considering specific intervention for a student or group of students, its effectiveness is determined by a pre and post intervention analysis. The school then revises the intervention or puts additional suitable intervention in place. Good intervention strategies enable students to catch up quickly. There is a constant review of what is needed and by whom. The flexibility of allowing students who did not graduate from grade 8 to take a mixture of grade 8 and 9 courses is also a specific area of frequent review and modification. The plans for the next stage of the improvement may not always be formal but they are effective.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Brooklyn Studio Secondary School	△	▷	✓	+	◇
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 . . .	△	▷	✓	+	◇
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 . . .	△	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set demanding, 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?			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?				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 make 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	