

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2009-2010**

**Brooklyn Academy of Science and the Environment**

**High School 547  
883 Classon Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11225**

**Principal: Veronica Peterson**

**Dates of review: January 6 - 7, 2010**

**Lead Reviewer: Nancy Gannon**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Brooklyn Academy of Science and the Environment is a high school with 446 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 82% Black, 11% Hispanic, 2% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 84.4%.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is underdeveloped with proficient features.**

Brooklyn Academy of Science and the Environment is a school that reflects a great amount of change in a short period of time, a fact that every stakeholder mentioned proudly. By reorganizing the school schedule to allow for common planning time for every grade team, the principal has made an enormous positive impact on teachers' ability to effectively support their students and on their own sense of job satisfaction. Although the principal is putting enormous effort into other areas of professional development, those efforts are not consistently reflected in classrooms and there is no mandatory focused professional development for the whole staff. Systems are developing throughout the school, including a new ninth grade academy that allows for better support of the school's newest arrivals, credit safety net program that helps struggling students, a regular team leader meeting, and a more active, more effective leadership team called the school committee.

The school has started examining data through its support organization's data tracker and through Snapgrades, which has helped leadership find areas where teachers need more support in effectively moving students forward in their academic growth. These changes have led to some strong practices in the school. Throughout these changes, the principal and the strong partnership with Brooklyn Botanical Garden and Prospect Park Alliance provide a sense of stability and a connection with the school's mission.

Two committees regularly meet to share concerns, but at this time, there is no structured system for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum and instruction or for the collection, analysis, and use of data. The school has used data to set goals that align with priorities, but currently they have not set interim benchmarks to track progress toward those goals and evaluate the impact of decisions and actions. Similarly, teachers work in teams to improve student learning outcomes, but they have no benchmarks to track progress in their work.

Lastly, school leaders do not yet offer enough support to teachers around setting a positive classroom environment. Parents note that the school emphasizes college readiness but that teachers allow disrespect and that the hallways are frequently chaotic. Because the school does not offer adequate teachers support in this area, there continue to be some issues around a positive tone in the school.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal's strategic reorganization of resources has created a schedule and structures that build in meeting time and create a sense of accountability among teachers, which has led to better student outcomes.
  - This year's new schedule gives every teacher common planning time, allowing teachers to meet to discuss a shared group of students. Although their 25 minute meeting time is short, it has provides a time to focus on individual students and broad strategies that help students learn.
  - The ninth grade has been reorganized into an academy consisting of four cohorts that travel together and those cohorts each have an identified teacher leader who feels accountable to that group of students. Within this new academy structure, the teachers have also instituted a credit safety net program for struggling students. This restructuring has led to higher pass rates and better attendance within those groups.
- Because a vast majority of the teachers are now in grade teams, they are better able to collaborate on best instructional practices, leading to better results for students.
  - Teachers discussing an eleventh grade student identified his struggles around writing and test taking. They reviewed his strengths and weaknesses, referred to information on his individual education plan, and proceeded to give suggestions about how the whole team could better support that student in each of his classes. By identifying successful strategies, teachers ensure better outcomes for students.
  - One ninth grade teacher counseled another on how to refine his credit safety net system, noting that these students are already struggling to complete homework and, therefore, perfect homework completion should not be the biggest criteria for staying in the program. By sharing practices that work, teachers more effectively support student success.
- The introduction of two new tools allows school leaders and teachers to begin to use data to identify and respond to trends, which has resulted in additional supports for students.
  - Data analysis through use of the tracker and through a close examination of Regents tests led to the development of a writing class to further support students who struggle with Regents classes across the curriculum because of their weak writing skills. Although this class is still a work in progress, the practice of developing curricular and structural supports in response to data on where struggle is enabling the school to re-examining curriculum to promote stronger student outcomes.
  - Teams of teachers use Snapgrades regularly to better understand student trends within their classrooms and across a grade. When teachers meet to discuss achievement, they consistently refer to data on

Snapgrades to indicate trends in a student's performance or trends across a cohort. As they examine this data, they are better able to adjust instruction and curriculum to support growth in student learning.

- The school regularly looks at a range of data to understand where they have been successful and where they need to change practice.
  - The data tracker provides the school with clear information around credit accumulation, attendance, and summative assessments. By analyzing this information, the school has been able to identify areas of need, including ninth grade organization and pass rates, as well as school-wide attendance.
  - The school's attendance teacher has implemented innovative practices, such as the use of Facebook, in order to locate and communicate with absentee students, which has resulted in a 4% increase in attendance this year. By using data to determine organizational changes, the school is able to target changes that positively impact student learning.
- The school has created better systems that communicate more effectively with parents about the academic progress of their children.
  - Parents speak highly of Snapgrades as a tool that allows them to track progress of their child in classes. Parents receive up-to-date grades and direct emails from teachers, allowing them to monitor and support their child's learning.
  - Parents also speak highly of events provided by the parent coordinator, including parenting workshops that have begun to create a dialogue about the school's expectations how parents can best support students in their academic growth.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Create a clear, strategic plan for school-wide professional development to support teachers' growth in a specific and targeted way, leading to stronger student outcomes.
  - Currently the school has a time-intensive plan that repeats the same session four times over the course of the week, allowing teachers to go when most convenient for them. Although the principal should be commended for her effort to reach a broad range of teachers, attendance is voluntary, which means that a significant number of teachers do not benefit. Formal discussions about practice are not taking place across the faculty because not everyone attends professional development sessions and those who do attend, do so at different times. Mandatory faculty meetings have a non-instructional focus, which does not support effective outcomes in the classroom.
  - The principal's goals for this year's professional development span collaborative learning, Bloom's taxonomy, and differentiation. Although there are connections between school-wide goals and professional development goals, the broad focus of professional development has led

to uneven implementation of practices across classrooms, resulting in a patchy impact on student learning.

- Capitalize on effective structures by using them to regularly review curricular, instructional, and organizational decisions to assess their effectiveness so that student outcomes are monitored and evaluated in a systematic way.
  - Currently, the school committee meets regularly to bring teacher concerns to the attention of leadership and to problem solve, but they have no pre-planned agenda items. Previous agendas document that they address various issues by happenstance but do not monitor or evaluate curriculum and instructional decisions through any regular plan. Because there is no system for regular monitoring and evaluation, the school can not regularly assess whether curricular, instructional, and organizational changes have been effective in increasing student outcomes.
- Implement professional development to improve teachers' ability to create safe spaces and a positive learning environment that allows for accelerated student learning and their social and emotional development.
  - Currently, students speak glowingly of some of their teachers, but also speak about teachers who are not willing to listen and who are not supportive of their academic or social-emotional needs. Students said that they wished for "more understanding about what kids like" and "more interesting, interactive classes". They also said that although "you can talk to some teachers" that the school "sometimes feels like jail". Because the school offers no opportunities for teachers to learn strategies to support youth development, the school does not always feel safe or supportive to students.
- Establish clear, time-bound systems so that school leaders and teacher teams can better measure progress toward goals to ensure that they are moving toward better student outcomes.
  - Although the school has articulated clear goals, they have not broken them down to specific, measurable outcomes and specific interim benchmarks. Without interim checkpoints along the way, the school does not have an accurate measure of where initiatives are succeeding and where interventions need to happen in order to ensure positive student outcomes.
  - Similarly, teacher teams have broad goals around accelerated student achievement in the lowest third of their population, but they have not set up a system to measure progress toward that goal. Without a clear system to measure progress, they cannot assess whether their work has been effective.
- Regularly use summative data to look at trends and set specific goals for subgroups so that those students get the consistent support they need for academic success.
  - Currently, school leaders and teacher teams look at trends for the whole student body and looks in more detail at students who struggle with credit accumulation, but has not looked at other subgroups. Because there is

no data analysis or goal setting for other subgroups, the school cannot measure their progress or know if they need more support at any level.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

<b>School name: Brooklyn Academy of Science and the Environment</b>	<b>△</b>	<b>▷</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>
<b>Overall QR Score</b>		<b>X</b>		
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	<b>△</b>	<b>▷</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			<b>X</b>	
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?			<b>X</b>	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?			<b>X</b>	
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?		<b>X</b>		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>△</b>	<b>▷</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			<b>X</b>	
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?		<b>X</b>		
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?			<b>X</b>	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>	

<b>Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?		X					
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?		X					
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?		X					
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?			X				
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>		X					
<b>Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?			X				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			X				
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?		X					
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?		X					
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>		X					
<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?		X					
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?		X					
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?		X					
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			X				
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>		X					
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed