

Quality Review Report 2009-2010

Brooklyn School for Music & Theatre

High School 548

883 Classon Avenue

Brooklyn

NY 11225

Principal: Pamela Randazzo

Dates of review: March 2 - 3, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Rhonda Hurdle-Taylor

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Brooklyn School for Music and Theatre is a high school with 417 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 82% Black, 11% Hispanic, 1% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 30% of the students enrolled and girls account for 70%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 86.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The principal of Brooklyn School for Music and Theatre envisions the school as a place where students have multiple opportunities to explore and excel in the performing arts. Her belief that students can achieve at high levels when challenged academically is unmistakable and is the basis for the school's strong professional development focus. Classroom intervisitations, peer coaching, mentoring, and instructional workshops allow teachers to learn from each other and from their instructional leaders. As a result, the rate of students graduating and moving on to a variety of Junior and Senior colleges is steadily increasing, as is the number of students passing Regents. The school community is committed to student success. The school purchased new software which allows quick access to all student data. Data retrieved from this and a variety of other sources allows leaders to adjust the curriculum, re-assign staff, assign peer mentors and change programs to better meet the needs of students. The hallways tell the story of the school's academic expectations and the competencies needed to attend and succeed in college. '75 or higher for college readiness' is visible everywhere. However, the school is still working towards establishing a cohesive structure that aligns the school's curriculum with the State standards to ensure that the work of all students is accelerated.

The school communicates expectations to students and families in a variety of ways and parents are appreciative of the frequent emails, phone calls and mailings that inform them of their children's academic progress, attendance records, academic interventions, and after school activities. However, feedback to students regarding how well they are doing in their work with clear next steps is not always consistent. As a result, students are not always provided with a precise understanding of how they can improve.

Creative planning enables teacher teams, led by teachers, to meet weekly by grade and curriculum area to conduct collaborative inquiry, plan lessons and examine student work. However, these teams are just at the beginning stages of the capacity building necessary to embed this practice in the school's culture. Recognizing the performance gap between male and female students, the school has at least one inquiry team focused on the achievement of male students. They provide support with writing strategies across all content areas, while the school provides after-school academic assistance, counseling, college application assistance, and other support structures to ensure the success of this sub-group. However, the team does not yet evaluate its progress towards meeting the goal for these students in order to make necessary changes. As a result, their work has not yet taken root and the gap in academic achievement between girls and boys is still too broad.

What the school does well

- Leaders make informed and effective organizational decisions across all aspects of the school to support improvements in learning.
 - The school purchased new software to sort and easily access student assessment. This tool allows administrators and counselors to have quick access to students' academic and attendance data which they analyze carefully, and use the results to provide students with academic remediation or enrichment.
 - Instructional staff reviews students' academic progress at the end of each trimester to place students in classes according to skills, rather than by grades alone, thereby improving their chances of academic acceleration.
- Relationships across the school are warm, supportive and inclusive of students, teachers and parents, who feel valued and take pride in being part of the school community.
 - Students speak openly of the many adult advocates who are readily accessible to them and who provide a wide range of academic and social support, including college and Regents preparation. Students say that teachers make themselves available during the scheduled period eight tutorial sessions to assist them with any course work with which they are struggling. The school service initiative has also helped students and teachers to build positive relationships.
 - The school is keenly aware of individual student's needs and communicates with families about the specific ways that those needs are being met. Teachers and counselors call parents regularly to report concerns they are having and to share any noticeable improvements in their academic progress.
- Teachers work effectively in collaborative teams to share good practices, develop tools to analyze data and to plan curriculum and instruction.
 - Teachers work together to revise the school's curriculum to better meet the academic needs of their students. They meet by curriculum area to design instructional strategies in order to improve academic deficiencies. They plan lessons together, share instructional skills and visit each other's classrooms to observe best instructional practices. This is increasing the level of teacher accountability.
 - A vast majority of teachers are involved in structured collaboration. They meet regularly by grade and curriculum areas to identify students who need additional support. They examine student work and assessment data, and, based on the results, they design specific classroom strategies, aimed at resolving academic problems. Classroom goals are reviewed and revised every six weeks with specific strategies devised with students to assist them in their learning.

- The principal has a clear vision for accelerated learning, supported by the school community, which has created a learning environment that is well focused on student outcomes.
 - o A caption in every hallway and classroom reminds students that they must score at least a 75 in order to pass their Regents. In order to ensure that students accomplish this, the principal and her cabinet routinely analyze classroom grades on the software report to effectively track students' academic progress.
 - o The school analyzes a wide range of data to get a clear picture of students' strengths, weaknesses and trends. This provides a clear understanding of students' performance within content areas as well as by cohort, and the information effectively directs decision-making processes, such as additional course offerings, after school credit recovery and Saturday Regents prep.
- Professional development is a high priority and faculty benefit from varied opportunities to share and develop strengths as individuals and members of the teaching community.
 - o The school has a professional development plan that includes tiered support for staff. Monitoring of instruction strengthens administrators' knowledge of teachers' professional learning needs. As a result, teachers receive training to meet their specific needs and ongoing feedback on their instructional practices to improve lesson delivery.
 - o The administrative team has developed a strong, common instructional school-wide focus and provides multiple opportunities for teachers to be engaged in professional development at the school level. The principal has also designated mentors to teachers who are struggling with instructional issues or with classroom management, resulting in some improvement in planning and delivery.
- Leaders use a wide range of data to evaluate the effectiveness of organizational decisions, interventions, professional development supports and deployment of staff and make adjustments as necessary.
 - o Based on results from formal observations, daily walk-throughs and teacher surveys, the administrative team schedules teacher teams to meet weekly to plan lessons, and provides regular opportunities to share best instructional practices and resources.
 - o Administrators meet weekly to analyze teacher performance and pedagogical effectiveness, based on data from learning walks. As a result, they are able to modify teachers' programs to accommodate inter-visitations with their more instructionally effective colleagues.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that all lessons engage students and offer suitable challenge at their level, including effective questioning that elicits higher-order thinking and extends learning.

- o Although the school provides professional development on differentiated instruction, there is a lack of consistency around this practice. Teachers do not always use the available resources to make lessons engaging, resulting in instruction that does not always meet the needs of high achieving students and of their struggling male sub-group. Teachers do not all plan lessons that are intentionally designed with strategies to increase academic rigor, differentiate instruction and engage students in all sub-groups. As a result, not all students are achieving as well as they could.
- Develop coherence and alignment in the school's curriculum with State standards to ensure that all students make progress in their learning.
 - o The school purposefully offers advanced placement courses for students as well as the necessary remedial courses. However, these courses do not always successfully engage the students as many programs lack sufficient opportunities for the development of critical thinking and problem solving skills.
 - o Teachers assess students' abilities, and work in teams to plan instruction so that students learn the skills required to succeed on Regents exams. However, many students still struggle with the basic standards-based curriculum, as lessons are not always focused on the academic needs of students as identified through data analysis.
- Provide consistent feedback to students, with detailed reasons for their success and clear next steps for improvement, based on specific rubrics, to help them set and achieve their goals.
 - o The school's plan to maintain student portfolios in all classes in order to better gauge and guide student performance is inconsistent. Some portfolios contain student work with no evidence of teacher feedback and some teachers do not retain portfolios of student work. As a result, students are not always aware of ways to explicitly improve their work.
 - o There is a school-wide initiative to communicate with students regarding their learning goals and academic progress. However, these conversations are not yet focused enough on specific targets, or include the use of rubrics to guide student work.
- Evaluate progress toward defined strategic goals and make associated changes through regular, formalized interim checks against measurable targets.
 - o The grade 9 inquiry team focuses on improving writing in all content areas by creating a checklist for students to proofread and revise their work. However, the effectiveness of this strategy is not yet monitored and evaluated, with agreed criteria and timescales once it is implemented in the classrooms. This means that administrators are unable to measure the success of the initiative in achieving school goals.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: Brooklyn School for Music and Theatre	△	▷	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?		X		
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?		X		
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?			X	
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1		X		
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.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			X	
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?			X	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?		X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

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.							
<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				
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X				
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.							
<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				
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X				
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.							
<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				
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed