

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

The Brooklyn Latin School
High school K449

325 BUSHWICK AVENUE
BROOKLYN
NY 11206

Principal: JASON GRIFFITHS

Dates of review: April 17-18th, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Carolyn Yaffe

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Brooklyn Latin School is a high school with 460 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 29% Black, 20% Hispanic, 14% White, 35% Asian students and 1% other students. The student body includes 0% English language learners and 1% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 95.5%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well-developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school faculty has designed a highly rigorous, coherent learning experience for students that is designed backwards from International Baccalaureate (IB) standards and leads to meaningful student work products and college readiness. (1.1)
 - o Curricula in all subject areas is designed backward with key skills and content emphasized so that students are prepared for IB exams in their 3rd and 4th year of their high school experience. The sequence of content and skill from year to year promotes college readiness both through the rigor of tasks and the independence through which students approach and navigate their work. One key example of the effectiveness of this backwards design is the scaffolding of skills connected to the IB exam called “Oral Commentary,” where students have to orally analyze a text and answer impromptu questions from reviewers. To build students’ capacity towards this independent assessment, the experience is scaffolded from fishbowl to class discussion leader to discussion leader over the course of their English language arts experience. As a result of this careful scaffolding, students in an 11th grade English language arts class conducted an analysis of Hamlet, led by a class leader, where the teacher interjected only once with a probing question and students otherwise demonstrated both ownership over the discussion and facility with highly sophisticated literary analysis that demonstrated deep understandings of the text. Similar scope and sequence work is done in other disciplines, so that across the school students lead discussions, make “declamations” and identify essential disciplinary features of work at high levels. The collective impact of this work is the 100% college acceptance rate for the first two graduating classes of the school, with a large number of those acceptances coming from highly competitive colleges and universities. At a more granular level, the impact of this work is highly visible in the student work products, class discussions and one-to-one conversations with students, where they are able to articulate what they learning, why they are learning it and speak easily about sophisticated concepts across disciplines.
- The school has carefully considered requirements to attain an IB degree and skillfully organized human resources, school time and programming to work towards the realization of this goal. (1.3)
 - o Human resources and time are strategically organized through the lens of support and preparation for IB exams. The school has carved out time for departments to meet several times a week for the team to review student assessment work that informs curricular refinements and supports structures for students. Students are programmed into mixed-grade advisories to foster the inclusive, non-hierarchical school culture that supports the intense academic experience for students. At the close of each school year, the faculty reviews processes in place to support students to prepare for the IB exam from both the academic and logistical perspective and has adjusted programming, teacher placement and support structures as a result. Key examples of this include: the addition of a 9th grade transition class to socialize new, incoming students to the demanding academic expectations of Brooklyn Latin; a fall semester reading, writing and research class for all 11th graders to support students at the beginning of their college journey and introduce them formally to elements of the IB requirements; and a 12th grade spring semester class that supports students in the transition to college expectations. As a result of this work there are less than

five students per grade on the promotion-in-doubt list, more students are completing their IB requirements this year and there is very little attrition for graduates who attend college.

- There is a highly articulated assessment process in place that includes a cycle of analysis, reflection and instructional adjustments that yields increasing student mastery as evidenced in student discussion and work products. (2.2)
 - Interim assessments designed to track readiness towards IB skills are at the core of the school's instructional practice. Departments create unified assessments and rubrics for each grade level within a discipline and meet often as a department to build assessment tasks, examine student work and refine tasks, curriculum and pedagogical moves based on the data. In addition, department teams grade both interim assessments and IB portfolio projects collaboratively to inform a collective conversation that supports improved student outcomes on assessments and course grades. One concrete example of this process and its yield is in the 9th grade history course where the collaborating teachers identified areas of weakness across student essays in terms of making and supporting claims in body paragraphs. As a result of this, they adjusted instructional time, structure and materials, including scaffolded graphic organizers and a peer review process, to hone in the development and support of the "little thesis" in body paragraphs. Because of this work, the average interim assessment score from one administration to the next increased from a 2.7 to 3.07 (out of 4). A broader outgrowth of this work is the strong cohesion to the instructional experience students have within and across departments and the facility with which faculty can speak to and own improvements connected to curricula and pedagogy.
- Professional collaborations across the school are focused, unified and led effectively by teachers; this work yields both strong investment from teachers and improvements to curricula, pedagogy and student work. (4.2)
 - Departments are led by teachers and play a large role in the decision-making structures of the school. Broad instructional goals are defined by the school's cabinet (with input from teachers) and department chairs shape the curricular and pedagogical work within their discipline towards those goals. The work of departments is intensely focused on the analysis of student work to inform curricular and pedagogical decisions and practice. The on-going work of departments has yielded a coherent scope and sequence within each discipline towards the IB degree and a consistency and quality in teacher pedagogy across classrooms. As a result of having both of those pieces in place, student work products consistently demonstrate deep content knowledge and critical thinking skills. Another important impact to this work is the self-reflective culture that has been built among the teachers in the school; this culture drives constant and critical revision processes that push all members of the school towards excellence.
- School leadership facilitates a year-long sequence of goal setting, observations and reflection to support increasing quality of teacher pedagogy and inform professional development, leading to strength and cohesion of teaching practices. (4.1)
 - The school takes a proactive stance to teacher development through a rigorous hiring process that includes an initial phone vetting, a demonstration lesson, an interview with all department members and, once a hiring decision has been made, an entry interview to understand individual teachers' learning styles and preferences. A week before the school year begins is dedicated to orientation for

new teachers and there are new teacher support meetings twice a month. In addition, new teachers are folded into their departments through department-created curricular materials, including maps and assessments (which are collectively revised in an on-going fashion) to support a focus on meeting the unified pedagogical expectations of the school community. Frequent and focused feedback is given to all teachers through the lens of the Kim Marshall rubric, which the school community has been using since its inception 6 years ago. Norming of the school instructional rubric takes place through the cycle of frequent observations coupled with on-going meetings with department chair and a twice yearly meeting with the department chair, assistant principal and principal to assess teacher performance against school expectations and provide next steps. As a result of this deep and focused work on expectation setting, feedback and support, pedagogical practices across the school lead to high-level student discussions and work products and there is a cohesion to the practices across classrooms.

- Rigorous expectations for academics and for membership as part of a strong school culture are internalized and articulated by all members of the school community, leading to a school culture that pushes each member to achieve their best. (3.4)
 - Parents unanimously expressed that the culture of the school models and supports the cultivation of discipline, a serious work ethic and kindness in their children. Parents shared that the IB program, the emphasis on college and the emphasis on student discussion and presentation throughout the curricula yields increased independence, preparedness and facility with speaking to and with adults. Students, in turn, describe the high expectations their teachers have for them in terms of time management, participation in class discussion and quality of work. They also describe that rather than creating a highly competitive atmosphere, these expectations further drive peer support of one another in the face of the rigorous demands of the IB curriculum. The norms that drive the professional culture of learning in the school are evident in the level and quality of conversation that teachers have in their department meetings and ultimately in the quality of the student work that is produced across classrooms. As a result of these high expectations across the board, all school constituents echoed one another in the description of the school culture as inclusive, disciplined and fully supportive of intellectual pursuits. In addition, these high expectations have yielded a 100% college acceptance rate for the first two graduating classes, a high retention rate in college and reports from alumni of being well prepared for college work and life.
- There are formal and informal high-level analyses of curricular and instructional work that inform revisions, contributing to exceptional coherence of vision and implementation for curricula and pedagogy across the school (5.1)
 - The school community has a variety of structures to analyze the effectiveness of its planning and decisions connected to curricula, pedagogy and organizational resources to support them. At the more granular level, teachers check-in with their department chair on a regular basis and school leaders check-in with department chairs to understand immediate changes or on-going work in each classroom and across classrooms in a department. In addition to the on-going department meetings where curricula and pedagogy are adjusted from the assessment outcomes, school leaders review assessment data from each department and IB exam outcomes to determine the effectiveness of programs and pedagogical approaches at the school level. As a result, programming was adjusted at the 9th and 11th grade level to orient students towards school and IB requirements. Additionally, scope and sequencing of skills and assessments has

been revised to scaffold towards IB performance tasks. As a result, based on current interim assessment data, more students are poised to graduate with an IB diploma than the 33% who graduated with this diploma in the first graduating class who went through the IB program.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue the work of folding in the large number of staff new to the school to further unify and strengthen high quality teaching practices that exist across classrooms (1.2)
 - o Although there is high quality teaching across classrooms that leads to high level discussions and sophisticated student work products, because the school's enrollment has fluctuated widely from year to year, there are large numbers of staff that need to be oriented to the Brooklyn Latin way of teaching year to year. As a result of this challenge, there are classrooms that are not yet fully reflective of the belief systems connected to teaching and learning.
- Build on the strength of the current professional development practices to envision and facilitate a more cohesive advisory system that supports students' social, emotional and academic development. (4.4)
 - o Although the school provides robust guidance supports for students that result in a strong, supportive school culture and high levels of student achievement both within the school and as they pursue postsecondary education, the school does not currently have a clearly articulated vision, goals or an accompanying professional development plan to support its advisory program. As a result, what happens across advisory classrooms and how well this targets and supports students in need is inconsistent.
- Sharpen the systems for measuring progress towards short and long term goals so that a more refined picture of movement towards school goals is known and understood by the school community (5.3)
 - o The school has a clear vision for a trajectory of growth and strong long-term goals to scaffold this planning. While teams of teachers definitely maintain detailed records, have deep understandings connected to the growth of individual students over time and review collective assessment data to effectively inform planning, what is not currently in full place is the more deliberate tracking of groups of students with specific skills that need to be built. The school cabinet also does not have a fully articulated or transparent system for planning targeted goals for groups of students and tracking those goals to demonstrate growth. As a result, teacher teams and school leaders are not easily able to articulate the growth of their students who are achieving at higher levels.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

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|--|----|---|---|----|
| School name: Brooklyn Latin School, The | UD | D | P | WD |
| 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> | UD | D | P | WD |
| 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 as evidenced by meaningful student work products? | | | | 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 |
| 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> | UD | D | P | WD |
| 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 Align assessments to curriculum, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level? | | | | X |
| 2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum? | | | X | |
| 2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students' progress toward school and class expectations? | | | | 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> | UD | D | P | WD |
| 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 staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them? | | | | 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> | UD | D | P | WD |
|--|----|---|---|----|
| 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, guidance/advisement support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students? | | | 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> | UD | D | P | WD |
|--|----|---|---|----|
| 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, with particular attention to the CCLS? | | | | 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 |

Quality Review Scoring Key

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|-----------|-----------------------|----------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| UD | Underdeveloped | D | Developing | P | Proficient | WD | Well Developed |
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