

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**Brownsville Academy High School
High School 568**

**1150 EAST NEW YORK AVENUE
BROOKLYN
NY 11212**

Principal: LASHAWN ROBINSON

**Dates of review: May 15-16, 2012
Lead Reviewer: Karen Watts**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Brownsville Academy is a high school with 190 students from grades 10 through 12. The school population comprises 88% Black, 8% Hispanic, 2% White, 1% Asian students and 1% other students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 5% special education students. Boys account for 44% of the students enrolled and girls account for 56%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 73.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's comprehensive curriculum emphasizing key standards and Diploma Plus competencies integrate Common Core State Standards, CCSS, and tasks that promote academic achievement and postsecondary readiness. (1.1)
 - o Brownsville Academy High School is a transfer school that uses the Diploma Plus Model that promotes a set of competencies that provide students with the skills they need to master academic work and prepare them for college and careers. These competencies, are seamlessly integrated in the school's comprehensive curriculum, are aligned to the CCSS, and focus on key standards such as writing across the curriculum, analyzing informational text, developing oral and written arguments, and modeling in math. Additionally, the curriculum includes pre-advanced placement and honor courses, and mandatory College Now courses at either CUNY's John Jay or Medgars Evers Colleges, and blended courses through the Department of Education's iZone. Students develop career ready skills through the many work-based learning opportunities afforded them in the Learning to Work Program. Curriculum is delivered to students through carefully developed Portfolio Worthy Assignments, (PWAs), in tasks that challenge all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, to develop higher order thinking and academic skills that promote post secondary readiness.
- The school's inclusive and respectful learning environment fosters positive student attitudes towards and involvement in their learning leading to improved academic outcomes. (1.4)
 - o Every student is assigned to an advocate counselor/scholar advocate provided for by the school's community based partners. The advocate counselor ensures that the student is on track academically and supports his/her behavioral and social emotional growth. Scholar advocates proactively call students to wake them up in the morning and monitor their timely arrival to school, closely monitor their academic results, and counsels with the student and parent frequently. Students say that the school feels like one big family because they feel safe and it is drama free, get the attention they need, and they know everyone. The school's active student government has advocated for various school activities and trips that have been put in place. The varied youth development supports and activities has contributed to positive student attitudes towards school and learning, with one student stating that she cannot wait to get up in the morning to rush to school, thus leading to academic success for previously disconnected students.
- School leaders and faculty develop and use tools to gather and organize student academic outcomes so that trends in student performance inform decision-making. (2.3)
 - o Administrators and teachers use DP.net to gather and organize student performance data. Performance data is generated from tasks that students complete using carefully developed assessment rubrics that are aligned to the key standards, and which show where students are along a continuum of emerging to mastery. As a result, student performance trends are easily identified to quickly make curricular and instructional decisions at the classroom,

team, and school levels, so that students' needs are addressed and achievement improves.

- The school provides frequent and timely communication regarding student performance so that families are aware of scholars' next learning steps to improve their academic success. (2.4)
 - o All families have access to timely student performance data on DP.net, ARIS, and iZone. Families receive training at orientation and continued assistance in using the tools as needed. The parent association is very strong and provides many opportunities for parents to learn about their children's school and progress. Parents receive frequent communication from the school primarily through the advocate counselor who may make home visits, wake up calls, and phone calls for various other reasons, thus contributing to the school's family oriented atmosphere. Parents state that the counselors are persistent and will not stop until they are reached. They also receive information from individual teachers and the parent coordinator. These structures have allowed parents to be keenly aware of the next learning steps for their children so that they can support them to academic excellence.
- The principal's clear vision for the ongoing improvement of the school's instructional program is supported by data based goals and action plans that drive student learning. (3.1)
 - o The principal has set goals and created and implemented action plans to incorporate the CCSS. This is aimed at improving literacy across the curriculum and modeling in math. Additionally, she has strengthened and diversified the curriculum offerings through blended learning, differentiated professional development for her teachers to implement new instructional strategies, worked to increase credit accumulation by dividing the school year into quarters instead of semesters or trimesters, limited the effects of student lateness by rotating the daily schedule, and is producing college ready students by having students retake the Regents' exams for higher scores. These goals are known and supported by all constituents of the school's community who were involved in crafting them, and the actions plans are being diligently implemented by all staff members. The principal's relentless focus on the use of innovative structures and the implementation of effective strategies to improve the instructional program has resulted in increases of Regents' pass rates, Regents' scores, credit accumulation, and a 21% increase in the graduation rate as compared to the last school year.
- The school's community based organizations, college and industry partners, provide guidance, academic, and real world learning, that create pathways to postsecondary opportunities for all students. (4.4)
 - o The school's partnership with Diploma Plus, a highly successful model for the instruction of students who did not previously find success in traditional comprehensive high schools has fostered the development of the academic potential of its over-aged and undercredited students through a competency based model where students progress on skill attainment rather than only through content acquisition. Also, the school's other partners including CAMBA and NYC Mission Society, help foster a very student centered school community with a focus on attendance improvement through aggressive outreach, real world learning through paid internships, college readiness through College Now courses and social-emotional development through community service.

What the school needs to improve

- Enhance questioning techniques and discussion strategies to improve student thinking and participation leading to evidence based discussions. (1.2)
 - o Across classrooms there is evidence of strong unit and lesson planning resulting in differentiated activities and the use of instructional strategies that address the learning needs of diverse populations and fully engage all students in each lesson. The school's belief that students learn best by doing is evident in the reading and writing tasks students complete and in the presentations they perform. However, questioning techniques, research skills, and discussion protocols, are not yet adequately strengthened to include sufficient opportunities for students to cite text reliant evidence as they argue and defend their positions during discussions and debates.
- Strategically use the school's resources for targeted instructional needs to improve academic outcomes for all students. (1.3)
 - o Teachers share responsibility for their students' academic progress through their work on inquiry and subject area teams. The school's schedule allows for some teams to meet weekly and others on a monthly basis where they use student work data to refine tasks and rubrics to better meet students' needs and assess their growth. However, the schedule does not yet provide ample opportunities for team meetings so that instructional adjustments are timely to improve students' academic results.
- Strengthen assessment practices of on-going checks for understanding so that instructional adjustments can be made to better meet students' learning needs. (2.2)
 - o Teachers use the ten qualities of a strong assessment checklist to ensure that they are developing effective assessments and rubrics and routinely revise the rubrics to ensure that they are providing accurate information on how well students are meeting or exceeding the CCSS. The rubrics are also used to guide students' self-assessment as they complete in-class activities. However, these practices do not include a variety of strategies for teachers to check for students' understanding during the lesson thereby limiting teachers' ability to make real time adjustments during the lesson to meet the immediate learning needs of all students or to make students aware of their next learning steps.
- Monitor the implementation of feedback through the observation process to improve the effectiveness of teacher practice. (4.1)
 - o Administrators use the Danielson Framework to provide clear expectations of teacher practice and to provide frequent and timely feedback showing teachers' strengths, weaknesses, and next steps. Student assessment results are also used to provide feedback on teacher effectiveness. Additionally, teacher peers use the framework during inter-visitations to provide feedback from a different perspective. However, in many cases the same areas in need of improvement are identified in subsequent observation reports showing that feedback was not immediately implemented, thus limiting teacher growth.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Brownsville Academy High School	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>				
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>				
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>				
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	
1..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

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