

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**Brooklyn Bridge Academy**

**High School K578**

**6565 Flatlands Avenue  
Brooklyn, NY 11236**

**Principal: Max Jean-Paul**

**Dates of review: May 21 - 22, 2012**

**Lead Reviewer: Simeon Stolzberg**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Brooklyn Bridge Academy is a transfer high school with 230 students from 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The school population comprises 86% Black, 9% Hispanic, 3% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 60.0%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school maintains a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults. (1.4)
  - The school has a safe environment and inclusive culture that support progress towards the school's goals. The small school and small class sizes support productive relationships between students and staff, who both use words like "close" and "family" to describe the school community. Through the advisory program and deliberate hiring of teachers who work well with the transfer population, the school model is designed to "build student confidence" in their ability to succeed. The school recognizes student achievement through bulletin boards and ceremonies, creating a climate that encourages effort. Despite violent incidents in the local community, students and parents described the school itself as safe and focused on learning. School leaders monitor a range of data, including attendance rates and faculty survey results, to improve programs. Evidence of success is seen in an uptick in Regents pass rates.
  - Each student is known well by at least two adults who help to coordinate attendance, social-emotional learning and other youth development supports that impact the student's academic success. The school's intake process allows staff to immediately identify each student's individual needs. The school has partnered with FECS, a community partner that provides a robust advisory program including attendance outreach, mediation, family outreach and college support in addition to advisory meetings three times per week. Also, each student meets weekly with a separate teacher advisor to review their performance and requirements for graduation. The school's guidance counselor also provides counseling, college preparation and attendance support. Staff and advisors meet regularly to discuss student needs and strategize supports and interventions, resulting in improved academic performance.
- School leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs. (1.3)
  - The school continuously reviews and revises course offerings to ensure all students have access to credits and instruction necessary for graduation. A new English curriculum was selected to enhance motivation and engagement. The school recently became an iZone school and offers blended learning classes through Connected Foundations; after completing the course, students receive a netbook. The school has also invested in technology such as Castle Learning to support individualized learning. Supplemental tutoring and Regents preparation also support student achievement. The use of staff and student time is structured such that teacher teams meet at least three times per week to discuss curriculum and instruction. With small departments, all teachers take responsibility for student success, regardless of whether they are teaching the student at the time. The advisory program is also closely coordinated with the work of

teachers to keep students on track. The school leader has clear expectations for the type of teacher required to succeed in a school with over-age, under-credit students and hiring practices and teacher assignments are strategic to ensure appropriate courses are available throughout the year. These efforts all coordinate to support students' academic needs and help them to produce meaningful work products.

- Teachers engage in professional collaborations using an inquiry approach that promotes collaborative leadership and improved student outcomes. (4.2)
  - Departments have common planning meetings three times per week to address school-wide priorities, such as responding to literature and writing arguments to support claims. All teachers participate in inquiry activities where teachers select specific teaching competencies on which to focus their inquiry work, which are informed by students' credit accumulation and Regents pass rates in their subject area. Staff also participates in book studies; they have read and discussed books such as *Teach Like a Champion* and *Why Don't Students Like School*. In addition, advisory and instructional teams meet regularly to coordinate their work in supporting student attendance and achievement, leading to improved teacher pedagogy. For example, observation data indicated increased proficiency across multiple domains.
  - Distributed leadership structures are in place so that teachers have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school. Team leaders are responsible for coordinating the work of departments and supporting the implementation of school-wide strategies aligned to goals and priorities. Team leaders also participate in the school's leadership team, providing an opportunity for input into key decisions. Teachers are the driving force behind the school's development of curriculum and courses to ensure that students have opportunities to get the credits and skills they need to graduate, resulting in richer, more targeted student learning opportunities. For the example, school leaders noted the impact of foundation courses and effective sequences on Regents pass rates as evidence of their success.
- The school integrates youth development support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students. (4.4)
  - The school has developed internal capacity and external partnerships to provide youth development support services and real world learning opportunities during the day and/or after school. Internally, professional development for staff has focused on meeting the needs of the school's unique student population. For example, staff training has focused on developing resiliency and engaging curriculum and instruction to increase attendance, while new teachers are provided with support to develop their classroom management skills. The school has also maximized external partnerships and opportunities for students. FEGS provides an integrated advisory program that focuses on maintaining progress to graduation, the Learn to Work program provides students with paid work experience through internships, and New Visions, in addition to helping to found the school, plays an ongoing role as its support organization, all of which supports students' comprehensive social-emotional and academic development.

- Brooklyn Bridge Academy provides robust guidance to students to find or stay on the path to postsecondary readiness. As noted, each student has both an advisor and a teacher advisor who meet regularly with students to set goals and monitor progress. The advisory curriculum addresses, among other things, life skills, public speaking and leadership. Frequent trips to college campuses raise awareness of post-secondary options. The school also provides an array of resources to ready students for college, including assistance with college applications, financial aid and SAT preparation, helping students both understand and prepare for the realities of post-secondary success. Students reported seeing progress in their work and receiving substantive support in preparing for college.
- School leaders use observation of classroom teaching and analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and promote professional growth and reflection. (4.1)
  - School leaders support teachers' development, including those new to the profession, with feedback and next steps from frequent cycles of classroom observation and data. The school is part of the Teacher Effectiveness Pilot, which is using the Danielson Framework for Teaching to set expectations and evaluate professional growth. There is a school-wide focus on Domain 3, with emphasis on effective questioning to develop higher order thinking skills. The school has a systematic approach to setting goals, monitoring performance, and evaluating teacher strengths and areas for improvement. Teachers select specific domains and indicators from the rubric to focus on during their year. School leaders and external coaches observe instruction and planning. In addition, guided by protocols, teachers participate in intervisitations to learn from each other and provide peer support and feedback. The school pays particular attention to new teachers, including targeted support meetings and mentoring. This work results in consistent professional growth for all teachers, as evidenced in classroom visits and observation logs.
- Leadership evaluates the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of school-wide policies and practices. (5.1)
  - School leaders regularly evaluate the instructional program through frequent observation, surveys of teachers regarding their needs, and reports from coaches. Consequently, they have focused on developing literacy across the curriculum. Student credits and Regents performance are constantly monitored; at the end of each trimester school leaders and faculty examine internal assessment data and grades to identify the courses that students will need in the next cycle to keep them on track to graduation. The school has also implemented Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) tasks and, consequently, identified areas for raising the rigor of the overall curriculum. Staff noted that many students enter the school with limited proficiency in academic subjects; consequently, the school has created foundation courses to provide them with the basic skills and content necessary to succeed in subsequent classes that will prepare them for Regents exams. Electives are created to continue to hone those skills, especially for students who require multiple attempts to pass the Regents exams. This has resulted in improved success on the Regents exams. For example, students in the Social Justice

Student Voice intervention course had a 94% passage rate in the English regents in January. The department passage rate was 85% overall from 23% previously.

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

- Ensure the delivery of rigorous instruction that consistently engages students in learning activities that promote high levels of thinking and participation by all students. (1.2)
  - In some classrooms the teaching strategies, questioning, and routines were effectively differentiated so that learners could access the curriculum. Teachers used grouping, differentiated tasks, assessments and questioning to engage students. For example, students in one class were grouped to analyze comment elements of poems of varying complexity. Because attendance is a challenge, some teachers reviewed prior knowledge or lessons to catch up students who had missed previous instruction. Collaborative team teaching (CTT) classes are used to provide targeted support for students with disabilities and English language learners. Though the school has focused on learning styles, in a number of classes limited techniques were employed. For example, some teachers challenged students to verbally explain complex ideas that might have benefited from chunking information, writing or using graphic organizers. This inconsistency in differentiating teaching practices can lead to students' individual needs and strengths not being met, thus hindering students' academic development.
  - Because class sizes are typically very small, most students are engaged through effective questioning techniques and activities that encouraged participation. Some teachers asked students to explain or expand upon their answers, assigned challenging real-world problems, and encouraged the use of subject-specific vocabulary. One teacher asked a student "Why? What if I push back on you? Take a moment and think about it. Explain your thought process." Across classrooms, however, teaching strategies, questioning, and routines lead to uneven levels of student thinking and participation, as evidenced in student work products and discussion. In a few cases, students disengaged without consequence. In addition, teachers did not consistently challenge students at high levels. Though Hess' Depth of Knowledge Chart was posted, some teachers focused primarily on basic recall and missed opportunities to develop deeper understandings. For example, one teacher asked students where the distance formula came from; though one student eventually guessed the Pythagorean Theorem, the teacher moved on without explaining or demonstrating the connection. These inconsistencies in teaching practices limit students from higher levels of thinking and improved academic performance.
- Provide consistently rigorous and engaging curriculum and academic tasks that are appropriate for all learners. (1.1)
  - School leaders and faculty align curricula to State standards and make purposeful decisions to emphasize key standards in order to promote post-secondary readiness. The school has created a range of courses to provide students with the specific content and skills necessary to eventually pass the Regents and earn the credits necessary for graduation. Foundation classes

were created last year for this purpose; elective classes provide additional opportunities for students to acquire the content and skills they need. Teachers have developed curriculum maps for each class that guide instructional planning. Teachers also create detailed lesson plans that include objectives, specific content and skills to be learned, and learning activities; some reviewed plans included CCLS. The school has struggled with performance on history Regents exams, and the social studies curriculum is less coordinated than other subjects having more success in raising student achievement. In addition, school leaders recognize the need for more advanced opportunities and intend to offer Advanced Placement courses next year. The lack of consistency across curricula departments hinders school-wide attempts to make sure all students are prepared for postsecondary success.

- Some teachers assigned challenging texts, including novels, and complex word problems. The school recently adopted the ID Scholastic program specifically to engage students. In addition, some teachers provided students with choices; for example, one teacher assigned three levels of problems—bronze, silver and gold—and required students to choose twelve to solve with at least one from each category, thereby providing access to students at different levels. While teachers often focused on complex topics, the instructional materials did not always facilitate higher order thinking. For example, a lesson on the Cuban Missile Crisis utilized some engaging artifacts, such as maps and photographs, but did not provide students with rigorous text and evidence from which to draw conclusions. Curricula and academic tasks inconsistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills and did not always engage all students, limiting opportunities for all students to improve skills and for the school to close the achievement gap.
- Continue to refine assessments, data analysis and use results to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level. (2.2)
  - Teams of teachers and individual teachers use or create assessments and rubrics that are aligned with school’s key standards and curricula, providing feedback on the effectiveness of classroom level, curricular, and instructional decisions. Each trimester is divided into two-week periods for which all teachers create and administer formative assessments that culminate in Biweekly Assessment Reports (BARs), allowing teachers to regularly adjust curriculum and instruction. In addition, teachers noted using item analysis to identify specific content and skills that required re-teaching. Teachers are developing some common assessment tools, such as a shared writing rubric currently used by the English department. Departments look at data across classes to identify needs and increase alignment. For example, they have examined the impact of long-term absences and created courses for students who need additional skill development. The school recently implemented the Datacation system, which allows staff to incorporate and analyze more types of data, though parents do not yet have access. As a result of the consistent use of data, the school has developed an academic program that is increasingly moving students towards graduation. Gaps and inconsistencies in the current system, however, limit opportunities to make targeted and timely adjustments to curriculum and instruction.

- Enhance the use of data to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups and students in need of additional support. (3.3)
  - Teacher teams and individual teachers use regular assessment and other data to track progress and adjust plans and goals for student during the course of the year. Teachers create and administer assessments in each class every two weeks and issue BARs. This practice of providing feedback to students is consistent across teachers and supports students in mastering learning expectations. However, teachers will have to continue to review and revise these assessments to ensure alignment with CCLS and Regents expectations. In addition, advisors regularly meet one-on-one with students to review BAR results and identify needs for supplemental instruction and support such as tutoring or independent learning through online programs. The school also uses mock Regents exams to identify students ready to take their required Regents exams or in need of additional preparation. School leaders regularly evaluate these data, as well as credit accumulation and Regents pass rates, and use them during leadership team and faculty meetings to review and revise goals and strategies. Students are organized into cohorts based on credits needed for graduation, and school leaders use data to address the needs of individual cohorts and meet with each cohort to discuss the results. However, the feedback school leaders and teachers provide to students and families, as well as the variety of data sources they use to improve the effectiveness of this feedback is still somewhat limited in scope and specificity, limiting the school's ability to raise student achievement.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Brooklyn Bridge Academy	UD	D	P	WD
<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>	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?		<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 as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			<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>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>	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?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students progress toward school and class expectations?			<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>	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?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			<b>X</b>	
3.4 Communicate high expectations to staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?			<b>X</b>	

<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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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?			<b>X</b>				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
<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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			<b>X</b>				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>