

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

East Brooklyn Community High School

18K673

965 East 107th Street

Brooklyn

NY

Principal: Patrick McGillicuddy

Dates of review: November 21-22, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Aimee Horowitz

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

East Brooklyn Community is a transfer high school with 204 students through grade 12. The school population comprises 89% Black, 9% Hispanic, .50% White, 1% Asian and .50 American Indian students. The student body includes .50% English language learners and 9% 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 63%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Strategic organizational decisions are well aligned with the school's goal of developing a common definition around effective teaching and learning; and have resulted in elevated teacher practice and increased student learning.
 - The principal makes strategic use of coaches to support the math department on an ongoing basis and target teachers' professional goals and areas of need based on classroom observations. For example, An English teacher supports the social studies department by incorporating writing workshops and evidence based writing strategies into their curriculum and course outcomes. This has resulted in a focus across the social studies, English, and science departments of having students use evidence to support their arguments, while the math department focuses on engaging students with real world applications and in explaining their mathematical thinking. Consequently, the pass rate on the United States History Regents increased by 30% as did the pass rate on Global History. Additionally students scoring at level 3 or above on their Global History essays went from 36% to 55%, and there was a 24% increase in the percentage of students who wrote passing critical lens essays on the English Regents.
 - Department teams meet twice weekly engaging in inquiry through the analysis of student work to decide on instructional strategies to target students' needs, revise curriculum and course outcomes, and collaboratively plan lessons along with engaging academic tasks. Teachers and counselors meet weekly to strategize around student academic and social emotional achievement resulting in aligning their expectations and goals for increased student outcomes to the Common Core Standards. This has resulted in restructuring tasks and assessments requiring students to explain processes for solving problems and reflect on their mathematical thinking. Thus, on the math Regents, there was a 12.2% increase in students correctly responding to short answer problems requiring them to show their work.
- Academic tasks integrate the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and strategies to provide students with the skills necessary to close the achievement gap and promote post secondary readiness.
 - Instruction is aligned to targeted goals and classroom pedagogy engages students in rigorous common core aligned tasks enabling them to develop evidence based discourse and extended responses. In addition to the CCLS, the curriculum addresses key learning strategies including making connections, determining importance, making inferences, questioning, synthesizing, visualizing, and making predictions, that are identified as areas of growth for all students, including ELLS, SWD and other sub-groups, to close the achievement gap and promote post secondary readiness. As a result the school performed better than 56.3% of schools in its peer group on graduation rate and better than 68.2% of schools in its peer group on weighted diploma rate.

- The school's respectful, supportive, and inclusive environment supports students' academic and social emotional growth resulting in higher levels of student empowerment and engagement.
 - In response to an analysis of data on the latest Learning Environment Survey (LES) the principal formed a culture committee comprised of teachers, counselors and administrators to create and build consistency in school wide policies. The school's strong partnership with SCO Family of Services ensures that each student is paired with a counselor who provides guidance, academic, and social emotional support via individual counseling and the school's advisory program. Student and staff concerns about safety, respect, communications, and academic achievement are shared and progress celebrated with "Hard Core" awards for academic and social emotional growth at community meetings. Consequently, the school environment is conducive to higher student outcomes, as evidenced by a 3% increase in overall attendance, with attendance for new students increasing significantly. Last year ten first year students had attendance that was lower than 20%; this year, no students are in that category. In 2010-2011 fifteen first year students had an attendance rate of 20-40%; this year only one student is in that category. Over the past three years incidents have decreased significantly as evidenced by a decline in suspensions from 25 in 2009-2010 to 15 in 2010-2011 to one in September of 2011-2012. Students new to the school this year earned an average of 3.7 credits in the first trimester as compared to new students earning an average of 2.5 credits in the first trimester of the 2010-11 school year.

- Outcomes based grading policies provides families specific information on student performance and supplies faculty with data to track student progress to modify curriculum and course outcomes.
 - The cabinet and staff analyze biweekly benchmark data, trimester credit accumulation data, scholarship reports, Regents item analysis, reading levels, attendance, and behavior data to track progress and ascertain what adjustments should be made to course outcomes, curricula, and school wide goals. Progress reports are analyzed at meetings with teachers and counselors to set and adjust goals for students. Based on students' performance, curriculum is revised, new courses are developed, and every trimester course goals are modified to meet students' needs. This analysis led the English department to develop strategies to teach literary elements, resulting in an increase from 5.3% of students scoring at level 2 or above on the critical lens essay in January, 2011 to 29.3% scoring at the same level in June, 2011.
 - Students receive biweekly progress reports informing them of their progress toward meeting targeted goals. For each outcome, a rubric outlines what students need to do to meet or exceed the standard. Students state that in conversations with teachers about their work they receive specific feedback and can advocate for themselves because they understand with specificity what the next steps are to achieve success toward identified goals, which is shared with families.

- Frequent, and strategic observation feedback conveyed via a research based framework provides teachers with clear expectations, and next steps to improve their practice to increase student learning outcomes.
 - The principal and his cabinet along with lead teachers, coaches, and peers engage in frequent and focused classroom observations providing actionable feedback aligned to a research based rubric. This supports the alignment of professional goals teachers set in conjunction with the principal, as well as analysis of student work. All teachers understand and have incorporated specific learning strategies into their lessons to engage students in higher order thinking. Examples include making inferences, questioning, visualizing, and meta-cognition. Peer observations are conducted using a protocol to evaluate implementation of learning strategies which are shared at department meetings. Accordingly, teachers share a common understanding of engaging, rigorous instruction to raise student achievement.
 - Teachers are provided with feedback, noting their strengths, weaknesses, and actionable next steps with specific attention to assessing student learning and strategies to engage students in research and critical thinking. “Give students a question mid-way through your mini-lesson or the application where you check everyone’s understanding (mini-whiteboards, clickers, color coded cards, or a Google form) before moving on and then re-teach important concepts if necessary.” is an example of specific teacher feedback to support students’ critical thinking. Subsequent observations and conversations focus on monitoring teachers’ progress towards meeting individual and school-wide goals, resulting in their professional growth.
- Teachers and counselors systematically engage in assessing progress towards interim and long term goals, to improve and adjust instructional practices, and revise goals to accelerate student growth.
 - Every trimester the cabinet, culture committee, and department heads assess progress towards goals via analysis of attendance, benchmark data, course outcomes, and credit accumulation data. As a result the time and frequency of course offerings, the design of blended learning courses, and the target population to whom they are offered was changed as was the school’s policy on “make up” work. This change has resulted in a 3% percent increase in school wide attendance, a decrease in the percentage of students attending school 40% or less, decreased lateness, an increase in passing percentages for first period classes, and greater student success in blended learning courses.
 - Teachers regularly share best practices that have supported individual and groups of students in meeting goals and achieving outcomes. At a recent staff meeting a science teacher shared a text coding system she successfully used to improve reading comprehension and writing skills for targeted students. This system has now been adopted by teachers in the social studies and English departments to accelerate student growth.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue differentiating academic tasks to meet the needs of diverse learners while providing students with the skills necessary to close the achievement gap and promote post secondary readiness
 - While all teachers strive to engage students in higher order thinking through questioning, using evidence to support their opinions, and provide students with multiple entry points into lessons, higher level students were not always challenged with extensions to deepen their thinking and enabling them to enhance their potential.
 - Students are engaged in common core aligned tasks and most participate in discussions using academic language. However, leveled texts were not evident, thus limiting struggling readers from independently engaging in reading and writing activities to elevate their thinking.
- Refine data analysis so that subgroup achievement is disaggregated and increase checks for understanding and opportunities for students to self assess and determine the next steps to improve their work.
 - While teacher teams and individual teachers use interim assessment data to supplement summative data they neither consistently incorporate self assessment opportunities into daily instruction nor use varied assessments for checking understanding throughout their lessons. This diminishes teachers' abilities to make immediate adjustments to lessons. Consequently, instructional strategies and tasks are not always strategically revised to meet the needs of all students.
- Refine goal setting so that interim data based differentiated goals are set for subgroups supporting them in closing the achievement gap.
 - Although teachers and teacher teams create and use course outcomes as goals for all students and continuously track individual and class progress via benchmarks and attendance goals, the lack of interim goals for targeted student subgroups hampers awareness of their performance and trends, thereby limiting the ability to pinpoint areas of need to close the achievement gap.
 - While learning goals for all students are embedded in course outcomes and each student is provided with an individual path to graduation, not all teachers consistently identify students in need of extensions or set differentiated goals for accelerated students to maximize their learning. As a result, high achieving students do not always fulfill their potential.
- Formalize the system for evaluating teacher teams to strengthen the impact of their work on student achievement and build leadership capacity.

The principal and lead teachers meet biweekly with department heads to discuss and evaluate team meetings and model facilitation protocols. This enables faculty to adopt practices that have worked to increase student achievement for use across the curriculum. However, department heads are somewhat self selected and structures for identifying and developing potential leaders are not yet embedded. The absence of these structures results in missed opportunities for teacher leadership development.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: East Brooklyn Community HS	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							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed