

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

The Brooklyn School of Inquiry

20K686

**50 Avenue P
Brooklyn
NY 11204**

Principal: Donna Taylor

Dates of review: March 19-20, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Karina Costantino

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

20K686 is a city wide gifted and talented school with 254 students from kindergarten through grade 3. The school population comprises 7% Black, 4% Hispanic, 76% White, and 12% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 4% special education students. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 96%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school offers a rigorous, advanced curriculum aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) across grades and subjects, including the Arts, in order to increase college readiness skills. (1.1)
 - The school incorporates curriculum maps that are aligned to key State standards, specially writing, across all content areas and grades. They have closed the achievement gap as evidenced by DY0 assessments and student work products, particularly in non-fiction writing as indicated in student work products.
 - The school supports the development of self-expression through dance, theater, music, painting and drawing. Collaboration with many New York City cultural institutions enables the school to promote the Arts both in and outside the classrooms. The school has a partnership with the Brooklyn Historical Society that focuses on social history; the Old Stone House is a Social Studies partner and teachers work with Wingspan Arts in theatre and movement. In addition, each student studies violin with a Suzuki master. Focusing on the Arts, which are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) using an interdisciplinary model, allows English language learners (ELL's) and special needs students entry points on their specific levels. Teacher teams design academic tasks that incorporate identified academic needs through data analysis of unit assessments and students' work for accelerated students as well as targeted subgroups. This results in is a school wide curriculum where students are consistently being challenged with rigorous projects.
- The principal makes strategic organizational decisions that are well aligned with the school's instructional focus that has increased student achievement. (1.3)
 - The principal hired a violin teacher to support the instructional focus on the Arts. This teacher services one half of each class from kindergarten through third grade on an ongoing basis, while classroom teachers provide individual attention to the remaining students. Since these groups are flexible, this allows small group instruction throughout the year to address subgroups and improve overall student outcomes as evidenced by Acuity in the third grade and DY0's in kindergarten and first grade.
 - The school leadership has programmed a block of time for three periods on each grade so teachers can plan lessons, develop curriculum and instructional strategies and reflect on best practices. For example, the second grade revisited their teaching practice for place value after looking at various research based strategies and used an inquiry approach which helped targeted students to better master this concept. This results in high quality lessons and ultimately improves student academic.
- Students demonstrate high levels of engagement in well matched lessons, with challenging questions which result in rigorous discussion and student work products. (1.2)

- Immersed in the study of Webb's Depth of Knowledge, from kindergarten through third grade, the school's curriculum and teacher teams provide rigorous project based learning opportunities across grades and subjects to support their belief around how students learn best, which is in a project based learning environment. This was evidenced by the Unit on New York City History where the students in grade 2 participated in Farmyard to Backyard. Using primary sources, students created brochures, became museum curators and became involved in their surrounding community as they studied New Amsterdam. Closely aligned with the Common Core State Standards, students created rigorous work products showing the connections between "then" and "now". Currently the same approach is being used with the third grade students who are studying China.
- Students in each grade, beginning in kindergarten through grade three develop their own rubrics for reading, writing and math aligned to the content areas. Students develop a series of questions while discussing sample exemplars in the four content areas, to which they reflect on their own work and the work of their peers. The teacher acts as a facilitator, as students direct their own conversations around each other's work. As a result, students work independently and identify their next steps. This promotes and encourages independent academic excellence.
- Through the use of a wide range of data tools, school leaders have an ongoing understanding of the progress and performance of all students, which results in modifying instructional practice to improve student outcomes. (2.3)
 - The principal and assistant principal have developed excel sheets for each assessment given on each grade. This allows them to have an overview of school wide trends and other challenges throughout the grades, informing the types of support needed for targeted students and instructional support for teachers. This positively impacts student performance as well as teacher progress as evidenced in students' work.
 - In conjunction with the School Leadership Team (SLT), the school has developed a new report card from kindergarten through third grade which effectively aligns with the new CCSS strands, allowing the school to pinpoint the areas of need for each student presenting a clear and concise picture of school performance. In addition to promoting consistency of grading policy from kindergarten to third grade, the school can highlight performance trends and inform adjustments in curriculum and instruction to support increased student progress for all students.
- The school has established effective systems for monitoring teaching practices and reflection with a clear focus on improving instruction and professional growth. (4.1)
 - The principal has standing appointments with each teacher to discuss and reflect on their instructional practices for next steps. Feedback is provided through the use of weekly classroom observations, which focus on rigorous questioning during each lesson. This allows the administration to guide individual teacher development aligned to a teacher template. In addition, numerous opportunities for new teachers, including an extra period where needed, is provided to observe their colleagues. Follow up visits are then conducted to insure mastery of

targeted instruction. This impacts teacher practice, offering many opportunities for assistance and improves student performance as evidenced in work products.

- The science teacher has dual certification in teaching English as a second language (ESL) and the principal allows her time to meet with teachers and teaching assistants to provide them with professional development, as well as strategies to use during their lessons with ESL students. After conducting classroom observations and reviewing student data, the principal meets with teachers to design a targeted PD plan to support their growth. While all teachers participate in additional ESL training, specific supports are planned for individual teachers. These supports provide input on teacher assignments and tenure as well as improve student outcomes as evidenced in the number of students passing the New York State English as a second language assessment test (NYSESLAT).
- The principal conveys high expectations to staff and families thus positively impacting on the next level of student achievement. (3.4)
 - The school enjoys a wonderful relationship with its parents, beginning with the “tribes” process where they are an integral part of its philosophy. In addition, the parents on the SLT play an active role in making school decisions, such as the approval of the new school report card that communicates high expectations to all families around student performance. Teachers and the principal communicate with parents daily on Google.com, not only for questions and answers, but how to understand curriculum. In addition, each grade sends home a monthly newsletter which gives the parents strategies that enable them to assist their children on the unit they may be working on in any one of the core subjects. The school provides all teachers with professional development on designing projects and questions that challenge and engage students at a high level using the Depth of Knowledge (DoK) model. Consequently, parents state that they are aware of classroom and school expectations and are better prepared to help their children reach them and teachers are trained to push all students to their highest proficiency as reflected in high quality student work.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop a structure at the school level to track goal attainment at specific times during the school year and communicate changes to all constituents. (3.3)
 - Although the school has a common shared set of beliefs about how students learn best and communicate data trends and needs to staff, there is no overall structure in place at the school level to formalize communication to teachers and parents when adjustments are made toward June goals. In addition, teachers did not provide evidence of specific feedback to parents for sub groups enabling them to master learning expectations. The absence of a system to inform all constituents in particular parents, of adjustments to goal setting, lessens support for a clear understanding on how they can assist students in reaching their next goal.

- Refine action planning by having school wide systems in place for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals for professional development so progress can be measured, adjustments made and success evaluated. (5.3)
 - The Network supports the school and offers opportunities for professional development, however, there is no overall school professional development plan that is tiered to address the needs of all the teachers. The principal and assistant principal visit classrooms for informal and formal observations and assist teachers in developing their professional goals, however there is no system in place to track when they meet their targeted goals. Consequently, adjustments to specific goals are not always in place to support professional growth.
- Encourage teachers to practice checks of understanding and strengths during their lessons so that adjustments are made to meet all students' learning needs. (2.2)
 - Teachers and teams effectively align their summative and interim assessments to key curricula and utilize resulting data to make instructional adjustments at grade and class levels. However, there is little evidence of ongoing checks of understanding and strengths and student self assessment during the delivery of instruction resulting in missed opportunities for on the spot adjustments that promote student understanding, of all subgroups.
- Develop a school wide system to measure progress of teacher teams towards desired goals they have developed for targeted students or groups of students. (5.4)
 - Although the principal and assistant principal visit team meetings throughout the year, there are no consistent protocols or periodic benchmarking of their progress during the year to evaluate their effectiveness, resulting in an inability to maximize their performance towards improving student outcomes. In addition, there is no evidence of structures in place to evaluate and support the role of distributed leadership among teachers. The lack of structures to gather data on teacher teams lessens the school's ability to make informed adjustments to support their development and identify teacher leaders to build capacity.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: The Brooklyn School of Inquiry	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?				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 and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?		X		
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, 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	

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 students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?				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, 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?			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