



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Quality Review
Office of School Quality
Division of Academics, Performance, and Support
2013-2014**

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

High School 548

**883 Classon Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11225**

**Principal:
Pamela Randazzo-Dorcely**

Dates of review: November 12 - 13, 2013

**Lead Reviewer:
Leslie Miller Chislett**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Brooklyn School for Music and Theatre is a high school with 393 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 84% Black, 13% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 35% of the students enrolled and girls account for 65%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 87.9%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's approach to culture building through the arts and structures for social and emotional learning results in a safe, motivating, and inclusive culture that promotes the adoption of effective academic and personal behaviors. (1.4)
 - To ensure students feel known, each student's schedule includes a seminar period where teachers provide information to foster involvement, nurture academic disciplines such as planning and studying and/or personal skills such as conflict resolution, and to celebrate success with their students. Also, students are matched with a guidance counselor that remains with them throughout their four years to ensure continuity to their advisement. Teacher inquiry teams study students "on-the-cusp" of making appropriate progress towards graduation to tailor strategies for support. In addition, at a recent faculty meeting, all students' names were posted and teachers and staff selected those they had a strong connection with to ensure all students felt supported; any remaining students were adopted for focused outreach. The school also takes a creative stance on discipline where in lieu of punitive consequences to non-serious infractions, students are assigned school service. They can appeal the decisions that are intended to change their behavior and foster relationship and personal learning. "BSMT Bucks" are given to reward positive social behavior and create incentives for students to demonstrate respect for their community. Outlets to foster student voice and recognition are intentionally provided. Some examples include numerous talent-area performance opportunities such as plays and concerts; an opportunity for students to produce a film with professional support as a public service message about bullying, and the student government or school leadership team (SLT) where students who are elected from each grade contribute to decision-making. Parents feel the school consistently supports students to succeed and nurtures their identities through the arts. According to all constituents, the school's intentional efforts to maintain a positive school culture have reinforced students' sense of membership within a close community that is committed to their success.
 - Communication among guidance staff and faculty occurs through the Skedula and i-Log online systems that are checked regularly so that there is a response to students' social and emotional needs that are monitored. Weekly "Dean's Meetings" provide a venue for the assistant principal (AP) for security, deans, and guidance counselors, to review issues that surface and to develop plans with teachers for behavioral assistance as needed. An attendance team including counselors, attendance teacher, grade-level teachers, and network personnel meets regularly to examine how to support students who are chronically absent. Community partners such as New York University Mobile Nursing and Counseling in Schools assist with mental health support. Art therapy is provided for at-risk students and specialized counseling groups are structured, such as a young women's group that meets afterschool, to creatively respond to youth development needs. As a result of an organized response to the social and emotional needs of students, higher-level incidents resulting in suspensions have been reduced and students report they feel supported in their personal growth.

- School leaders nurture a culture of learning by communicating high expectations and providing supports and on-going feedback to teachers, students, and families, to understand their progress. (3.4)
 - The principal, AP, and curriculum director, through feedback to teachers and learning opportunities that emphasize the importance of classroom environment, questioning strategies, and discussion techniques, communicate high expectations for professionalism aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and professional responsibilities like parent outreach. Additionally, goal-setting conversations encourage teachers to aim for professional growth by using strategies aligned to domains of the Framework for Teaching and student achievement areas. Teachers set personal learning goals, thereby creating a system of accountability that includes weekly newsletter reminders, classroom observations, modeling of practice, planning with common unit and lesson plan templates, occasions for lesson videotaping, and peer feedback from classroom visits, that helps them remain accountable and grow towards those expectations. The principal works with teachers to select excellent student work that is used as subject and grade-level exemplars for the Common Core Learning (CCLS) and content standards. In this way, teachers and students gain a common understanding of what represents mastery of a task and how this is evidenced in students' work products. Consequently, a culture with high expectations for professional learning is upheld and teachers are supported in furthering their own learning and student progress in keeping with the CCLS and Framework for Teaching.
 - The school also communicates to families high expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness. For example, the school hosts Spring Parent Dinners for each grade to support parents in understanding credit accrual, assessments, and other requirements towards graduation such as science lab completion. Honor roll has been instituted to celebrate students meeting the high bar for this recognition. Teachers regularly call parents to share class progress and counselors send home numerous letters each trimester with transcript information. To zone-in on timely graduation for juniors and seniors, students are notified with status alerts coded as yellow, silver, and gold, to underscore the importance of class credits and Regents exams they have accomplished or have yet to complete. To further prepare students for college and career, the school's college counselor supports students in the college application process. The guidance staff facilitates Senior Parent Meetings to provide advisement in assisting parents and students with college access. By leveraging outside funding, parents are offered support with their taxes, a key part of their completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FSFA). All of these efforts help the entire community focus on reinforcing graduation requirements, evidenced in increased passage of certain difficult Regents exams like Global Studies, and to help students prepare for the next level of their education.
- Teachers and teams use effective methods to provide students with actionable feedback and inform curricula and instructional decisions at the grade, department, and classroom level. (2.2)
 - School-wide use of the Collins Writing Programs creates coherence in the use of criteria related to content, organization, style, and conventions, to help students and teachers understand what to address to improve writing. All English language arts and social studies teachers provide feedback to students in the areas formulated as Focused Correction Areas or "FCAs". This helps students understand expectations for certain types of writing. Furthermore,

teachers examine student work and attend to the FCAs in revising lesson plans. In addition, the school has adopted the use of CC-aligned rubrics for literacy such as for argument writing in order to assist students with supporting claims with evidence. As teachers and students explained, rubrics help students understand the next steps for improving their writing.

- As the school implements the CCLS, common assessments and rubrics are being adopted and used including the Measure of Student Learning (MOSL) performance tasks. Through analysis, both ELA and social studies teachers are able to determine gaps in student learning, such as difficulty with identifying and explaining a counter claim to an argument or supporting it with reasoned evidence, resulting in adjustments to the ELA and social studies curricula. Common mid-term exams and student writing are also examined and analyzed during teacher team meetings to determine the adjustments for instruction to support student success in attaining class goals. Teachers use online grading and record book tools such as Skedula and Datacation to review aggregate student assessment information and are guided by grading policies to assess student progress. In addition, teachers use common quizzes and mid-term tests with Regents' exam items to make instructional decisions relative to student placement in academic support services.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen use of data-based needs assessment and monitoring of goals to accelerate school improvement, student learning, and their progress towards graduation. 3.1
 - At the time of this review the principal had drafted a Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP), including relevant strategies, to increase the graduation rate, improve performance on the Living Environment Regents, increase parent involvement, and support students to be college and career ready. In the School Self-Evaluation (SSEF) and interview, the principal and AP articulated additional goals derived from the Citywide Instructional Expectations and related initiatives such improving school culture through celebration of student success and exemplary performance. Currently, measurable interim goals have not been established or communicated to constituents, therefore impacting the school community's ability to track progress towards school-level goals and initiatives.
 - The principal uses information from teacher observations to inform professional development planning. However, currently goal setting and action planning at the school level in other areas such as for parent involvement and curriculum improvement are not supported by a comprehensive needs assessment and on-going use of multiple sources of data. This limits the leadership's ability to drive and monitor school improvement and acceleration of student learning.
- Deepen the alignment of the curricula to the Common Core Learning and content standards, integrate the instructional shifts, and design academic tasks so that higher-order thinking skills for all students across grades and subjects are prioritized. (1.1)
 - The school is aligning its curricula to the CCLS and has developed course maps in most content areas including the arts and had designed some unit plans. Course maps that are organized to show aims or essential questions, relevant CC and content area standards, "grade-wide" skills, assessment

evidence including “products/pre-assessments/post assessments”, key concepts and terms and materials, evidence continuity across grade as to the curricula planning process. Although the teachers use a common lesson plan template, the lesson plans reviewed, did not always include these elements in daily planning considerations. Staff is working to emphasize the CC instructional shifts in literacy in all content areas where possible along with critical thinking skills. For example, it was decided that teachers would target the instructional shifts in their assessments and emphasize critical thinking and writing across content areas aligned with the CCLS. However, use of non-fiction complex texts and related text dependent questions for higher-level textual analysis in keeping with the CC literacy standards are not consistently included in unit maps or lesson plans. Furthermore, some unit plans detail performance assessments; others do not. Only occasionally are critical thinking skills or the instructional shifts such as conceptual understanding or procedural fluency in math made explicit, and unit maps that show evidence of anticipated needs of diverse learners through scaffolds, even though there is a place for these details on the lesson plan template, is infrequent. As a consequence of occasional detail and emphasis on higher order thinking and the CCLS shifts, currently curricula does not consistently engage and prepare a diversity of students to be college and career ready.

- Refine instruction across classrooms to consistently provide access to appropriately challenging tasks and result in high levels of engagement and thinking reflected in work products and discussions. (1.2)
 - In most classrooms a portion of the lesson is dedicated to whole group instruction. During this time, some teachers use open-ended strategies such as a gallery-walk where students analyzed illustrated Constitutional amendments, or a discussion circle where students used their individually assigned texts to support connections between a playwright’s passions and biographical details. Dance and music classes engaged all students in performances. However, in at least half the classes observed, during the whole class portion questioning volleyed between the teacher and fewer than five students who could discuss the problem or text. While most lessons included time for students to work in groups or pairs to solve problems or complete writing tasks, higher levels of thinking were inconsistently demonstrated in student work. In an Integrated Collaborative Teaching class (ICT), students watched a video clip that illustrated the cell processes three times, took notes in a graphic organizer, and then were paired to redefine and illustrate the concept again. In another ICT, students watched a forensics video and were asked to generate criteria for a perfect murder, but could not connect this exercise to the teacher’s aim of having them use the criteria to analyze the texts they had been reading. Thus, questioning, scaffolds, and other strategies intended to engage students are not consistently yielding high levels of participation and higher-order thinking, thus limiting students’ achievement.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

K548: Brooklyn School For Music and Theatre	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score		X					
Instructional Core							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards?		X					
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?		X					
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels?			X				
School Culture							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X				
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations?			X				
Systems for Improvement							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
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				
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?		X					
4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection?			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				
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?		X					
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed