Quality Review Report

2013-2014

Brooklyn College Academy

Middle-High School 555

350 Coney Island Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11218

Principal: Nicholas Mazzarella

Dates of review: December 2 - 3, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Tamika Matheson

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Brooklyn College Academy is a middle-high school with 619 students from grade 8 through grade 12. The school population comprises 74% Black, 9% Hispanic, 4% White, and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 0% English language learners and 3% special education students. Boys account for 37% of the students enrolled and girls account for 63%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 95.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well-developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school designs common core aligned coherent unit plans, lesson plans and rigorous academic tasks, across subjects to promote higher order thinking for a variety of learners. (1.1)

    - Teachers who are engaged in writing curricula aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and the Citywide instructional expectations (CIE) submit each semester, for review by administrators, a calendar of lessons outlining course work topics. The school also utilizes a curriculum template discussed and agreed on by school leaders and the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) chapter chair that, along with unit plans and lesson plans incorporate content, essential questions, CCLS, content area standards, skills and Key Cognitive Strategies (KCS) for College Readiness based on the work of Dr. David Conley, University of Oregon. Additionally, every teacher received an iPad with the common core app Mastery Connect to support curriculum development by using the app to design, revise, and adjust curricula. Additionally, teachers post and share curriculum maps on the school's Google drive allowing colleagues to review and revise. Furthermore, teachers make purposeful decisions across grades and content areas as demonstrated in their unit and lesson plans by incorporating Understanding by Design (UBD) practices and differentiated strategies to deepen student learning, to provide students with targeted learning, and access to the content matter. For example, an eighth grade art class unit focused on students creating abstract watercolor paintings based on the colors of musical sound, and grade 11 and grade 12 students, including students with disabilities, enrolled in Early College classes at Brooklyn College for credit. In 2011-2012, students enrolled in 1,098 college seats with a pass rate of 98.25% and earned 2,891 credits. Thus, students are engaged in rigorous curricula and academic tasks aligned to CCLS that promotes college and career readiness as evidenced by the school receiving additional credit on its 2012-2013 Progress Report for closing the achievement gap between general education students and students with disabilities, and a 92.7% post-secondary student enrollment rate 18 months after graduating.

- Across classrooms, teacher practices demonstrate coherence regarding effective learning strategies to engage students in challenging tasks, and to promote higher order thinking skills in student work products. (1.2)

    - Teachers work collaboratively in Professional Learning Communities (PLC) focused on discussing student needs, evaluating teaching practices, and planning rigorous academic tasks aligned to the curricula. Teachers create and distribute course syllabi to provide students with a scope and sequence of topics, skill development, course requirements, assessment measurements, resources and grading policy evidenced by the Global History and Geography I and Global History and Geography II courses. Furthermore, teachers design student centered activities, differentiate instruction, and use ARIS data to flexibly group students. Lesson aims and essential questions promote higher order thinking and

incorporate rigorous habits. For example, aims and essential questions include “How does the use of symbolism advance our understanding of *Things Fall Apart*?”, “How does cultural bias influence the way we perceive life?” and “To what extent is the *Declaration of Independence* a model for Civil Rights?” Across grades and content areas, students were observed working in groups of four or fewer students, and teachers embedded guiding questions and accountable-talk opportunities within classroom instruction. The integration of technology, consistent use of rubrics, and implementation of exit questions or slips were evident during class visits. As a result, students are actively engaged and receive actionable feedback to strengthen work products. Students discussed how teachers support learning in class with the use of scaffolds and multiple opportunities to improve upon their work via the use of graphic organizers, outlines, and the provision of sample exemplars, and rubric feedback for revision. Students also explained how teachers incorporate varied levels of high interest materials such a non-fictional text, research papers, and articles from professional journals to develop college readiness skills. Examples of student work consist of extended written essays, open-ended math and science questions, student reflection papers, multiple written drafts and three-dimensional projects accompanied by a summary of the work. Teachers use varied and differentiated instructional practices to raise all students’ levels of higher-order learning and thinking such as English language arts reading and writing scaffolds to meet the needs of students with disabilities, read a-louds, books on audio, sentence starters and glossaries. As a result, student engagement and performance levels increased as evidenced by credit accumulation rates (High School Progress Report 2012-2013, 90% and higher in grade 9 and grade 10, including the lowest third, and 78% and higher in grade 11, including the lowest third), and the school’s graduation rate (High School Progress Report 2012-2013, 96.9%).

- Resources and organizational decisions are well aligned to school goals and support access to learning opportunities that lead to college and career readiness. (1.3)

    - The school subscribes to Skedula, an online grading system, and uses it to increase transparency and student-teacher-family communication. Skedula, also is used as a data tool, monitors student attendance, and allows for input of behavioral anecdotes and course grades. As a result, students, teachers, and parents, monitor students’ academic progress and students receive quality feedback from teachers regarding next steps to improve their work and grades The staff is using Teachscape and Google drive to support the school’s focus on deepening its work on the integration of the Common Core. Administrators use Teachscape to provide teachers with professional development support and immediate feedback. Teachers also post and share curriculum maps on Google drive to strengthen professional growth and pedagogical practices. Furthermore, teachers use a common core app, Mastery Connect to plan Understanding by Design (UbD) aligned units and peer inter-visitation activities. Thus, there is ongoing strengthening of instruction and augmenting teacher practice resulting in meaningful student work products.

    - Brooklyn College Academy school, consisting of two locations, services Grade 8 through grade 10 classes at the main campus, and grade 11 and

grade 12 classes on the Brooklyn College/CUNY campus. In order to ensure that sufficient time is allocated to build capacity, the school structures time for staff to engage in meaningful professional collaborations. It hosts an annual faculty retreat to focus on professional topics and this year revamped its professional development structure via a school based option (SBO) vote. Consequently, the school conducts weekly whole faculty meetings to promote collegiality and foster instructional coherency across grades, content areas, and the two campuses. Whole faculty meetings are held at alternating sites every Wednesday and teachers meet bi-weekly in grade level Professional Learning Communities (PLC) to engage in professional activities such as looking at student work, examining ARIS and Skedula data, discussions on differentiated instruction, and assessments. As a result, teachers explained how teacher team structures "impacts classroom practice" and affords them the "opportunity to discuss best practices and to work around a common goal." Teacher teams discussed how they examine student work, research new techniques, and adjust teaching practices for students with disabilities. As a result, teachers engage in high levels of professional discourse focused on building on effective practices, creating rigorous academic tasks and targeting the needs of students. Additionally, teachers appreciate the "collegial atmosphere" and feel respected by administrators for their "professional knowledge". This is evidenced by 100% of teacher responses on the Learning Environment Survey agreeing (21%) and strongly agreeing that "Teachers in my school work together on teams to improve their instructional practice," and 14% of teachers agreeing and 86 % of teachers strongly agreeing that "The principal at my school makes clear to the staff his or her expectations for meeting instructional goals." Furthermore, student programming in grade 10 through grade 12 provides students with learning opportunities to enroll in college level courses. Hence, 34% of grade 12 students in 2013 graduated with thirty or more college credits and 22% earned 15 to 24 credits as evidenced by school data collected by the National Center for Restructuring Education at Columbia University.

- A highly developed culture of trust and community supports the academic success and socio-emotional development of students and professional growth of adults. (1.4)

    - The school uses systems such as Skedula to record academic progress and behavioral anecdotes to identify academic and social-emotional interventions. In addition to the Department of Education Discipline Code, the school has a set of protocols and ladder of escalating consequences in place to address disciplinary issues. The assistant principal of guidance reviews behavior anecdotes daily and determines next steps that may include counseling, parent outreach, or a parent meeting. School leaders also created gender specific programs to support youth development. High school girls participate in SMART girls or Sisters helping each other Attain Respect and Triumph that focuses on voice, self-awareness, and community service. High school boys participate in the male counterpart, SWAG, Sophisticated Well Articulated Gentlemen. Furthermore, every student is known well by one or more adults. Guidance counselors cycle or follow cohorts of students through high school commencement. Parents appreciate the school's open door policy, and strong academic program evidenced by those who took the 2013 Learning Environment Survey (LES). One hundred percent of

parents responded that the school makes them feel welcomed and 98% responded that school keeps them informed about their children's academic progress. Parent meetings are regularly conducted for each grade level, focused on curricula, academics, discipline and college planning and the school's Early College program. Parents, students, and teachers also use Skedula to maintain lines of open communication. Additionally, students discussed how teachers provide multiple opportunities to revise and improve their work. The school hosts grade specific town halls each semester to give students an opportunity to voice their concerns and make suggestions. Students are also actively involved on the School Leadership Team and participate in conversations related to school improvement efforts. As a result, the school maintains a positive environment conducive to learning where students feel supported and safe evidenced by over 90% of students responding on the LES that they feel safe at school and by a student attendance rate of 95.3% (2012-2013), approximately 9.54% higher than the Citywide attendance rate of 85.76% (2012-2013).

- A common teaching framework and a teacher evaluation tool are used to conduct cycles of observations to provide teachers with actionable feedback to further augment school wide instructional practices. (4.1)

    - Administrators visited classes at the beginning of the school year to calibrate and norm observation practices. Administrators and senior faculty members serve as mentors to teachers and provide support. Administrators also generated and shared an Observation/Visitation calendar with teachers. Administrators conducted formal observations during the first round of visits because 27 teachers out of 28 teachers selected Advance Option 1. Administrators place a high priority on teacher effective evidenced by the Learning Environment Survey (2013); 96% of teachers agree (14%) and strongly agree (82%) that "School leaders visit classrooms to observe the quality of teaching at my school" and 93% of teachers agree and strongly agree that "School leaders give me regular and helpful feedback on about my teaching. Furthermore, the school uses a four-prong professional development approach or "platforms" aligned to Danielson's *Framework for Teaching* (Danielson), the Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE) and Understanding by Design to evaluate and foster teacher effectiveness. Teachers participate in professional collaborations such as Professional Learning Communities (PLC), Instructional Rounds, Peer Review and Teacher Self-Reflection. PLC serve as a vehicle for teachers to analyze student data to determine grouping, to discuss differentiated instruction practices and to examine the school's "problem of practice." The school identified formative assessment as its problem of practice this year. Teachers engage in Instructional Rounds to gather evidence around the problem of practice to inform teaching practices. Teachers also participate in Peer Review to highlight classroom best practices. Administrators and teachers describe the practice as a non-evaluative process used to examine common core instructional shifts. Additionally, as a culminating activity the Peer Review team presents their findings and turnkey practices to the faculty in June. Subsequently, during the year administrators plan to continue to embed Danielson in the observation process and Monday professional development meetings for teachers to discuss Danielson's connection "to everyday practice." Thus, collaborative professional activities are

improving pedagogical practices and leading to high quality student work products.

What the school needs to improve

- Further align assessments to curricula and feedback to inform effective adjustments to instructional decisions at the team and classroom level so that student progress toward mastery is supported. (2.2)
    - Teachers use grading policies, rubrics, and assessments aligned to the school's curricula, and provide feedback to students. Teacher teams also focus on formative assessments as a problem of practice to inform instruction and planning. Additionally, teachers check for understanding across classrooms during student group work, via guiding questions and exit slips to gauge student understanding. Furthermore, students stated that teachers provide rubric-aligned feedback and opportunities to revise their work. However, teachers across the vast majority of classes have yet to vary checks for understanding, missing out on making students aware of their next learning steps toward mastery beyond rubric-aligned feedback. Additionally, the school does not yet have a standards-based grading policy, although it plans to expand the use of Skedula for this purpose and for it to also track student mastery of identified tasks. Thus, inconsistent tracking of student progress leads to missed opportunities to adjust curricula and instructional decisions in a timely manner.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Brooklyn College Academy	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score				X
Instructional Core				
To what extent does the school regularly…	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				
To what extent does the school …	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				
To what extent does the school …	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