

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Brooklyn Lab

High School 639

**999 Jamaica Avenue
Brooklyn
NY, 11208**

Principal: Renel Piton

Dates of review: April 7 – 8, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Jennifer Eusanio

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Brooklyn Lab is a high school with 343 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 36% Black, 58% Hispanic, 1% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 18% English language learners and 23% special education students. Boys account for 63% of the students enrolled and girls account for 37%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013 - 2014 was 71.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The leadership's vision for school improvement is captured in database goals that are tracked and adjusted to improve instructional practices and student learning across classrooms. (3.1)
 - The school's Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) articulates focused annual goals and action plans that respond to a combination of Department of Education foci and data, including a yearly needs assessment review of the New York State Regents Exam, the Learning Environment Survey (LES), and the Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE). The CEP's five school wide goals for improving teacher practice and student achievement are tracked by the cabinet using spreadsheets containing data from performance and are adjusted based on the needs of the students. For example, the cabinet adjusted their school goals and decided to further develop student writing skills around the use of text based evidence as a result of their review of last year's Regents in English and the baseline Performance Task data. A school wide effort was made to produce graphic organizers and use the Cornell note taking system to support students' use of evidence based writing. In addition, each semester, based on notes from each marking period, the administration conducts data reflection meetings with teachers to track student progress towards attaining the CCLS through the exposure of performance tasks. As a result of this adjustment, student growth has increased in English language arts (ELA) by 70% in all grades based on the school's February Evidence Based Writing Benchmark Task data.
 - The school uses multiple data streams to set goals and develop action plans towards the improvement of teacher practices across classrooms. The cabinet conducts a data checkpoint meeting with individual teachers at the end of each marking period in order to analyze scholarship report information and benchmark learning tasks administered throughout the year. As evidenced in cabinet meeting minutes, school wide data is discussed to determine where the school is improving and areas needing further improvement. The information is disseminated to grade leaders to conduct department meetings with teachers to discuss progress towards school wide goals and growth areas relative to the data. School administration also reviews sets of teacher observation notes and the Teacher Score Tracker to determine areas for improvement within each staff's instructional practices. This analysis is further discussed between the administration and teachers during data reflection meetings and through other means of professional development. As a result of the implementation of data based goals and action plans, teacher practices have improved over the course of the year as evidenced in Teacher Score Tracker reports.
- Teacher teams engage in structured professional collaborations to analyze student work and data, which ensures strong levels of support resulting in improved instructional practices towards increasing student progress. (4.2)
 - Interdisciplinary grade level teacher teams work yearlong to review student work using a school wide Evidence Based Writing Assessment. Additionally,

weekly inquiry based professional collaborations allow for review of student work and the identification of instructional strategies to support improving teaching. For example, the review of a student's ELA assessment led to one team determining that instructional practices should be adjusted to include exemplars so students have model pieces. Furthermore, teachers identified the need for students to have opportunities to self-assess their work. As a result, grade wide teams are strengthening teachers, instructional capacity, and impacting consistency of classroom practices across content areas.

- Teacher teams analyze work for targeted groups of students based on weekly pre- and post-assessments in writing. Using a "Looking at Student Work" (LASW) protocol, teachers analyze targeted students' work for strengths and areas of improvement. For example, during one team meeting, teachers reviewed a pre-assessment in ELA and determined that the student understood the structure of how to write an argumentative based essay as well as how to state a position, but copied word for word from the assigned reading passages. In addition, the teachers noticed that vocabulary was an issue, which as stated in the meeting, probably led the student to copy the reading passage verbatim. Use of the protocol assisted teachers in determining that the student had gaps in understanding the passage and needed more support in reading and writing. Teachers decided to develop a plan to assist the student during the next few weeks and to share the plan with the English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher who also provides daily support, thus improving teacher practice and progress towards meeting student goals.
- The school alignment of units of study to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) consistently emphasizes rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills so that all learners have access to challenging curricula. (1.1)
 - Teacher created units of study are aligned to the CCLS and content standards and, effectively integrate the Instructional Shifts by specifically embedding evidenced based writing and academic vocabulary into curriculum maps and teacher lesson plans. Furthermore, all teachers use common lesson planning templates and curriculum maps to promote coherence in instruction. For example, all lesson plans include an essential question, Do Now, modeling, activity tasks, modifications, and a closing. In addition, teachers embed college readiness skills into their planning by integrating related Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) vocabulary into the curricula. As a result, the school promotes coherency in all subject areas and grades and college and career readiness for all students.
 - Curricula and academic tasks emphasize rigorous habits across grades and subject areas. The grade leaders, coaches, and teachers, use tools such as the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) to plan lessons and learning tasks that reflect higher order thinking. Curriculum maps and lesson plans highlight critical thinking questions and promote discussion groups, For example, in an environmental science lesson, some of the critical thinking questions were, "How can a genetic predisposition cause you to get sick?" and "Why must we consider money when our overall goal is to prevent illness?". In addition, included in the lesson plan, as part of a classroom activity, students were asked to collaboratively to determine the source of a mystery illness that was affecting a portion of the townspeople of Kildare, USA. Students were asked to weigh their options based on logic and cost effectiveness as well as work with team members to come up with the fastest and cheapest way to identify

the source of an illness. In an algebra class, students were asked to interpret word problems to create equations in one variable and solve them using factoring and the zero product property. Students worked in partnerships and groups to determine their solutions. As a result, the school's curriculum evidences challenging tasks that emphasize higher order thinking.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop teacher pedagogy to include practices that increase the quality of discussions and expand access through multiple entry points so all students are appropriately challenged, resulting in high levels of thinking. (1.2)
 - The school is committed to a set belief of pedagogical practices reflected in classrooms that teachers provide challenging, critical thinking questions to students. All students participated in classroom activities and some utilized tools that were planned to support and scaffold instruction. For example, in some classrooms, dictionaries and visual representations were provided, enabling students to use these tools to access the curricula. However, the use of tools and modifications to provide multiple entry points for struggling students were inconsistent across classrooms, which limits some students having access to tasks in order to demonstrate higher order thinking skills.
 - Across classrooms, students were grouped, demonstrating evidence of implementing instruction aligned to the school wide goals. In a variety of classes, students were grouped for different academic tasks, such as to find solutions, learn about literary techniques, and/or solve quadratic equations. In one math class, the majority of the students were engaged in discussion over several math problems, which reflected high levels of rigorous thinking. However, this was not a common practice across classrooms. In several classes, some students engaged in thoughtful conversations and others were not. Although grouping was a prevalent practice, the amount of student discussion within each class did not consistently reflect high levels of thinking and participation, thus impeding the intellectual engagement of students in their work.
- Ensure that the school culture includes structures that provide students with opportunities to have a meaningful role in decision-making and increase student advisement support to improve academic and personal behaviors. (1.4)
 - The school's approach to culture building has resulted in a safe environment. Throughout the building, students and adults treat each other with respect. This culture of discipline and support was evident within each classroom visited and within the school's hallways. Teachers, parents, and students, collectively reported that the school has improved in the area of safety, which has led to an open door policy with administrators for all community members. For example, when meeting with a group of parents, a few commented that the principal and other staff members made them feel welcomed and comfortable while discussing the academic progress of their children. However, although the culture is inclusive of adults, there is gap in communication to students. The school administration has implemented structures for student voice such as the Town Hall meetings, however, students do not feel their voices are welcomed and valued based on the school's responses to their concerns. For example, in one group meeting, several students reported a lack of response from the administration and

teachers to issues they felt were important to them such as more opportunities for labs and problems with front entrance scanners. Thus, the lack of meaningful involvement of student voice in decision-making hinders the school's ability to guide improvement efforts.

- A variety of structures provided by school leaders ensure each student receives support for their academic, social, and emotional behaviors. A teacher mentor conducts an advisory like program, which provides weekly support to all students affording opportunities for individual goal setting and action planning. For example, a review of students' goals showed weekly communication between a teacher mentor and student around classroom behavior and writing skills. In addition, there is an attendance committee, which meets monthly to conduct a review of student absences and lateness to provide intervention as needed. Furthermore, other staff members, including grade leaders and a guidance counselor, are provided to consult and support students with their learning needs and communicate with parents. However, the implementation of these structures has not improved student attendance. The average rate for attendance this year is 71.4%, a slight increase from last year, which demonstrated a rate of 71.1%. These percentages, which are below the peer and City averages, obstruct the impact of school wide initiatives to improve students' academic performance.
- Deepen assessment practices to include ongoing checks for understanding that are followed by instructional adjustments and meaningful feedback to students, resulting in increased mastery of learning goals. (2.2)
 - Benchmark and unit assessments are aligned with key standards and curricula. The school's grading policy is evident in the student and staff handbook and, there is a consistent use of rubrics that are task specific to assess student performance and provide specific comments relative to student work, especially in writing. For example, in one writing task, a teacher provided feedback that complemented the student's efforts and provided comments such as, "restate claim here" "and remember to always add your evidence" to highlight areas of improvement. Further evidence provided after the review was submitted, showed variations of feedback in order to include thought questions as a form of supporting a student's next steps. However, the practices of providing actionable feedback was not consistent across classrooms as evidenced in student work folders and bulletin boards, thus hindering the ability for students to utilize the responses in an effective manner to improve their achievement across all subject areas.
 - As part of a new school wide goal, teachers are asked to use three questions as checkpoints for understanding to determine the speed and pace of a lesson based on student verbal and written responses. Most instructional plans reflect questions or activities that act as checks for understanding within a lesson. For example, in some classrooms, teachers placed the questions on the board for the entire class to view. However, there was not enough evidence to support that the practices were implemented or documented across classrooms so that teachers make effective adjustments to meet all students' learning needs.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Brooklyn Lab	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