



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Quality Review
Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning
2013-2014**

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Brooklyn Studio Secondary School

High School 21K690

**8310 21st Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11214**

Principal: Andrea Ciliotta

Dates of review: March 4 - 5, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Rod Bowen

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Brooklyn Studio Secondary School is a middle/high school with 902 students from 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 5% Black, 24% Hispanic, 56% White, and 15% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 88.3%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school ensures that the Common Core Learning Standards and higher order skills are consistently embedded in the curricula, resulting in all students having access to rigorous learning experiences. (1.1)
 - The school has acquired Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) aligned curricula. The middle school is implementing Connected Mathematics Project 3 (CMP3) curricula in math and Code X in English language arts. The utilization of these specific resources ensures curricular coherence from grades 6 through 8. In the high school, teachers use CCLS, New York State (NYS) content standards and resources found on EngageNY to develop curricular materials. A geometry unit plan showed common core instruction shift 5: application within learning objectives such as applying the Pythagorean Theorem to determine unknown side lengths in right angles in real-world and mathematical problems in two and three dimensions. With an emphasis on moving students toward successfully taking the Global Regents examination, a high school social studies unit plan clearly identified Common Core reading and writing standards, NYS curricular content themes, and engagement in text-based findings to support the instruction of document-based question essays. Emphasis on students' ability to effectively use text-based evidence was found across grades and content area curricular materials. Such purposeful practices in developing instructional planning materials ensure that all students are being exposed to challenging learning experiences that prepare them for college and career.
 - The lesson plans reviewed showed evidence of rigorous habits and higher order tasks such as citing the work of another in a research essay, interpreting the use of personification, summarizing the impact and indirect results of the Commercial Revolution on European Society, comparing and contrasting the central and peripheral nervous system, and modelling and graphing exponential growth decay. Such skill-based, cognitively demanding tasks were found in plans of all content area classes including those that contained English language learners and special education students, resulting in all students having access to rigorous tasks.
- The school is developing assessment practices that generate formative data including increasingly rigorous checks for understanding so that effective instructional adjustments can be made to meet student learning needs. (2.2)
 - The school used pre-assessment data from its English language arts Measure of Student Learning (MOSL) assessment to identify skills that teachers could prioritize in teaching writing across the curricula. The ability for students to support their ideas with text-based evidence was a specific skill identified, and teachers immediately began to adjust curricula to address this learning gap. The school's Assessment Plan states that high school subject area mid-term and final exams are set for full implementation in the spring term, thus beyond the MOSL and data generated from state tests, the school continues to build its common

assessment practices to cultivate formative data that highlights learning trends across classrooms that can be used to increase student achievement.

- Across classrooms, teachers were observed asking questions to check for understanding. In a team taught math class, one teacher asked, “See what she wrote? What’s the indication in her notation that it’s not going to be a line?” When students were not able to readily come up with the correct answer the two teachers adjusted to revisit the concept so that students understood. In a discussion that took place in a higher level math class, the teacher posed questions such as, “Why are we doing this? What’s the big idea here? How can we rewrite this so that it conveys what we want?” A science teacher asked, “Why is it important that your body remain in homeostasis?” Though this level of questioning was not apparent across all classrooms, and rarely was instruction adjusted to address misunderstandings, teacher questioning to assess students was consistent. In addition, Code X activities in the middle school level English language arts classes showed examples of students having self- and peer- assessed writing tasks. As with the use of higher level questioning to assess student understanding, student self- and peer- assessment are developing practices in the school, resulting in the beginnings of instructional adjustments being made based on data to meet student learning needs.
- Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to a set of school beliefs, as well as to Danielson Framework expectations, resulting in increasing multiple entry points that consistently engage all learners. (1.2)
 - The principal and assistant principal asserted that the school believes students learn best when learning is student-centered and they are provided with opportunities to discuss, when multiple entry points are available to provide students access to content, and when students are using text-based evidence to substantiate their understandings and claim. All three are aligned to domain 3 of the Danielson Framework specifically in 3b: Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques, or 3c: Engaging Students in Learning. Student-to-student interaction was evident in five classrooms. In a social studies class containing special education students, as well as English language learners, students worked in groups to chart key ideas from non-fiction text; then representatives from each group had to present to the class and answer clarifying questions asked by their peers. Three classes had students focusing on text evidence including an English class where students used text evidence to form arguments for deinstitutionalization. An English language learner dominant science class was one of three classes that used Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies including video, text, a demonstration and a group activity to provide students with various entry points into the study of the nervous system. The implementation of such practices demonstrates the beginning of growth toward a coherent set of beliefs that engage all students in challenging tasks that push higher order thinking skills.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen the instructional observation system so that teachers are consistently provided with timely impactful feedback that promotes pedagogical growth. (4.1)

- The principal and assistant principal follow *Advance* procedures as they share responsibilities for conducting formal and informal observations. Perusal of written feedback captured in the *Advance* system showed that next steps were provided with practices that were rated developing and ineffective, but effective practices rarely receive next steps for improvement toward highly effective. In one of the team meetings, four of the six teachers present stated that they had been observed but had not received feedback, one having been observed in December. There was also a teacher that was hired in February who had not been observed in the month and a half that he'd been at the school. Another teacher recalled after an observation that she had in the first semester, she received verbal feedback, but nothing was memorialized in writing and she had no recollections of the specific guidance that she had received. These inconsistencies in the quality and timeliness of effective feedback, which includes actionable next steps, results in inadequate support and improvement of instruction in the school.
- Ensure that all teachers are engaged in professional collaborations that use an inquiry approach to analyze assessment data and student work to improve teacher practice and progress toward goals for groups of students. (4.2)
 - Though the majority of teachers are scheduled to participate in team meetings, they are not structured. Staff was not clear as to how frequently they are to meet over the course of a term. Teacher teams were clear that their work together is intended to increase student achievement through improved teaching practice, and teachers were observed discussing teaching and learning, but not in a productive, structured manner that yielded clear next steps, or potentially impacted pedagogy. One meeting ended with the facilitator stating, "Let's come back with the same instructional focus next week, 'cause I feel like I'm seeing the same stuff." Regarding the impact of the team work, a teacher claimed, "We support each other a lot, bounce ideas off each other, but there's not enough time to synthesize, apply and get results." Another teacher commented, "It's hard because we are not getting as much done. There's not enough time to track students over time." The current unstructured state of teacher team meetings is resulting in an ineffective use of professional time and a lack of focus on how to improve teacher practice and student learning.
 - In regards to the school's *Looking at Student Work* protocol, leadership noted, "We keep changing it. We want grade teams to be more about the practice. It's not perfect, but it's only going to come with consistency and time." During one teacher team observed, the protocol was present. However, it was not followed by the teacher team. Instead of reviewing the protocol (Step 1) and then silently examining the work (Step 2), teachers were observed chatting about the tasks and positing rationales for the students' output. When filling out a form intended to capture strengths and weaknesses of a student's work, a teacher commented in writing on the fact that the student finished the task, the quality of the graph that informed the task and noted "great questions" regarding the prompts, yet none of the feedback acknowledged the student's written responses. At one point, the facilitator asked, "What kind of patterns do we see with these kids?" Yet the team immediately began discussing what they had tried as teaching moves and shared other anecdotes that had nothing to do with the work in front of them. During another team that

was observed, teachers brought work from individual students and came prepared to discuss the learning challenges among the students and request feedback from their colleagues, with no evidence of a structure or the protocol; just the intent to share. Teacher teams' inability to effectively analyze assessment data and student work to glean strategic instructional next steps hinders the professional growth needed to improve student learning across classrooms.

- Strengthen the school's goal setting process so that it is more inclusive of invested community members and ensures that action planning is informed by comprehensive ongoing data gathering that improve teacher practice. (3.1)
 - Brooklyn Studio Secondary School creates a short list of school goals apparent in the schools Comprehensive Education Plan that are tracked for progress and communicated with the schools leadership team (SLT). These goals include targets centered on student achievement, the school's graduation rate and attendance. SLT meetings are used to develop the schools goals and as an avenue to communicate progress; similarly this group serves as the primary source in crafting professional development plans informed by school needs and leveraged to enhance student achievement. However, this structure of goal and action planning exists with only a surface level connection to the schools data gathering and analysis, using primarily teacher checklists and surveys to inform planning. Furthermore, the usage of this venue to serve as the primary venue for goal communication omits the involvement and communication with other key stakeholders including teachers, families and age appropriate students on a consistent basis. In the absence of a comprehensive goal setting and communication system, the improvement of teacher practice is hindered and the potential for the school community to cohesively work together to support a common vision of school improvement is subdued.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Brooklyn Studio Secondary School	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