



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning**

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

**Brooklyn Transition Center
High School K373**

**185 Ellery Street
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11206**

Principal: Regina Tottenham

**Date of review: February 25 & 26, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Beverly Ffolkes-Bryant, Ed.D.**

The School Context

Brooklyn Transition Center is a high school with 353 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 61% Black, 31% Hispanic, 5% White, 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 23% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 66% of the students enrolled and girls account for 34%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 81.2%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
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	Additional Findings	Well Developed
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	Focus	Proficient
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	Celebration	Well Developed
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Additional Findings	Well Developed
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Additional Findings	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Through regular use of a wide range of relevant data, leaders and faculty have an ongoing understanding of the performance and progress of individuals by group and subject.

Impact

The school's system to monitor progress through data analysis as well as during instruction is used regularly to effectively inform instruction and organizational adjustments to meet students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Weekly inquiry team meetings provide a forum through analysis of a plethora of data. Teachers have disaggregated the Student Annual Needs Determination Inventory (SANDI) assessment data according to student demographics and have identified student's strengths and needs. Teams use the Teacher's College Reading/Writing Continuum and Mentoring Minds "*Master Instructional Strategies*" when analyzing data and planning lessons after analysis of student work. The principal has also made sure that there is a Data Specialist on every team who helps teachers analyze the data to ensure that curricular and instructional decisions are meeting the needs of students. Data Specialists are part of a central instructional team that monitors and evaluates the work of teams resulting in success in leveraging positive school wide change.
- Classroom teachers across the school have data binders that manage student work and samples. Student's Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) are included, their IEP goals, Weekly Progress Reports and graphs and a Sensory Profile Communication Needs document. There is a binder for each student. Administrators use this binder during observations to see if the student is receiving rigorous work based on the data. Analysis of the Student Annual Needs Determination Inventory (SANDI) assessments of September and January, demonstrates that there has been a 90% demonstrated increased mastery in reading, a 95% demonstrated increased mastery in writing and a 100% demonstrated increased mastery in mathematics. In the one dedicated class of Bi-lingual learners there has been a 4.3% increase in writing, a 4.4% increase in mathematics. This tool also provides greater accessibility to student outcomes information enabling teachers to tailor instruction to meet the needs of individual and subgroups of students.
- It is the principal's expectation for students to self-assess since it is part of the Danielson Framework for Teaching as well as part of the teacher's post-observation conference. It is up to teachers to devise their own student self-assessment. This was visible in an English class where students were using a rubric to critique their written work about stress and what stresses them. It is expected for student self-assessment to be done at the end of a lesson. Students in transition classes videotape each other, which then leads to peer critique. In addition, students in the transition classes use Job Coaching Forms where they are constantly evaluating themselves based on their job performance. Self-Assessment packets were shared at teacher Brown Bag sessions. Students meet twice per week with their homeroom teacher during advisory periods to review their progress. In addition, there is a student self-evaluation form where students must determine their own next steps. This enables teachers to make instructional decisions geared to improve student performance and accelerate student growth.

Area of Focus			
Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

While pedagogy provides consistent instructional supports and includes questioning and discussion techniques, the use of strategic entry points and extensions that foster deep reasoning in student work products varies across the school.

Impact

Across classrooms, curricula extensions support students to produce some work products, yet here are missed opportunities for all learners to receive more rigorous work products and for them to take ownership of their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- While students are actively engaged in most classrooms, assigned tasks do not necessarily produce higher-order work products and are inconsistent across classrooms. This hampers students’ ability to fully participate in instruction; reduces engagement, and limits the opportunity for all students to produce meaningful work products that demonstrate higher levels of thinking.
- Although some teachers use a variety of classroom strategies that support difference in students’ learning styles, interests and abilities, other teachers still demonstrate teacher-directed lesson planning not allowing students frequent opportunities to cement their teaching through a peer exchange of ideas and assessments. Consequently, current levels of student engagement, motivation and thinking vary as evidenced in student work produced in many classrooms.
- Differentiation of instruction exists in most classrooms thereby providing students with multiple entry points into the curricula, however there are inconsistencies across classrooms. In two English classes observed, teachers had students view videotapes of examples of the lesson objective and both teachers asked higher-level questions during the viewing but afterwards students were doing whole class activities during Independent time. Thus, it is unclear if the current strategies are setting a path towards mastery of skill and content for all groups of students.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

All curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Higher- order skills are consistently emphasized for all learners across grades and content areas.

Impact

Curricular modifications and extensions effectively meet the very diverse learning needs of students and promotes college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses various Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) aligned programs for their curriculum and has differentiated it according to students' academic capacities. 6:1:1 students use the District 75 Alternate Assessment and link it to the Learning Standards for Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) as well as the Unique Learning System for English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics. 12:1:1 students use the Attainment curriculum for both English language arts and mathematics. Pre-transition students are piloting the WIN curriculum and concentrating on work readiness and aligning it to the CDOS. Transition students use the WAVE curriculum that is also linked to the CDOS. This allows for equitable opportunities in instruction to occur for all students.
- During the summer, an administrative team, comprised of administrators and various teachers, met to supplement the gaps found in the English language arts and mathematics programs. For example, teachers were aligning the district's curriculum crosswalk to the CCLS using resources from the Engage NY website. The principal talked about how this administrative team's analysis of instructional materials has resulted in the identification of appropriate supplemental materials that are utilized to provide targeted support for students.
- As result of the recommendation of the previous Quality Review which said "*to close the achievement gap by increasing the level of challenge for all students*", the school has implemented Goal-Based instruction. This targeted instruction, implemented three-times a week, is where students are grouped based on their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) goals and Student Annual Needs Determination Inventory (SANDI) scores. Teachers create skills-based lessons to help students master their goals. Through differentiated lesson plans, all students (low, medium and high achieving) are targeted during instruction. The principal has designed a lesson-planning template that helps teachers focus on student skills. This results in the development of accelerated progress toward reaching learning targets. In one lesson plan read, the teacher showed how students are targeted by their skills level and demonstrated the increased rigor present for higher achieving students.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school maintains a supportive learning environment that conveys high expectations via the use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching (DLT) training and other modes of communication.

Impact

Structures that support the school's high expectations build buy-in and accountability amongst staff, students and their families, thus providing a clear path towards increased career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school rewrote their report card and created a school-wide rubric that allows teachers to standardize tracking and reporting. Using this uniform rubric, all staff members are using the same system to enter student grades and communicate with families. This ensures a school-wide language to address student progress and suggested next steps. As a result, there is a consistent message to families on expectations and their role in assisting their children to advance.
- The school provides a multitude of avenues for families to understand their children's strengths and areas in need of improvement. The school designed a Weekly Progress Report. This report is distributed to all students to take home every Friday afternoons. The categories on the report were developed by teachers based on what parents were most concerned about their child's progress. The reports also include narrative sections for teachers to inform parents about accomplishments and areas of focus. The Progress Reports are aligned with the school's report card rubric in order to ensure uniformity of assessment and feedback.
- Parents are also involved in every step of the school's transition process, including the Vocational Level 1 Assessment and the development of the annual Post-Secondary goals on the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). They attend Front Door meetings at the school to apply for Office for Persons with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) eligibility in collaboration with classroom staff, administration and related service providers. In addition, the parent coordinator provides outreach to families and presenters from outside agencies are invited to speak at Parent Association meetings. This frequent feedback promotes rigor and ensures students graduate, become independent and career ready.
- It is the principal's philosophy that all students should give back to the community, which helps them "*get their feet wet with work*" and prepares them for their Pre-Transitional/Transitional educational experiences. All freshman/sophomore classes have to pick a topic they feel is important to them and create a Service Learning project with their teachers, which are reviewed by administration. Students do research, fund-raise and then go out to the neighborhoods to work. Some topics this year are; *Students Against Hunger, Childhood Cancer* and *Animal Cruelty*. Principal state that students are learning work skills and this work helps them move to their Pre-Transition sites. Teachers meet with students twice a week during these periods to review the project goals, the tracking sheets and discuss the next steps for the project. This work is helping students achieve more positive outcomes as evidenced by an increase of the Vocational/Transition and Adaptive Daily Living scores on their SANDI assessments.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Teachers take on a variety of leadership roles in the school and collaborate to examine student work, plan together and visit each other's classroom to share ideas and best practice.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has resulted in improved pedagogy and student progress on assessment. Shared leadership structure builds capacity to improve student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- To adhere to the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) goal to show a "25% increase in the number of high school students obtaining OPWDD eligibility", the assistant principal created a new school-based mentoring program, where the transition teachers meet with the Pre-transition teachers as a Professional Learning Community. They meet twice a month during Inquiry team time to discuss students and use a Student Progress Tracking Chart, track the various documentations/requirements students need to obtain Office for Persons with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) eligibility, which will help students after graduation. Transition teachers, are the mentors and are able to provide Pre-transition teachers their expertise and knowledge of resources for the students. It also helps Pre-transition teachers see this process and help their students prepare for the transition process more smoothly. It is the principal's hope that as a transition teacher retires, a Pre-transition teacher can assume the position.
- The principal realized two years ago that the school was lacking in Middle Management and focused on grooming teachers towards this. She created a Unit Coordinator's position that acts as the first contact in the administrative chain of command, is the organizational point person for all school-wide events, serves as the school's behavior specialist, supervises Positive Behavior Support programming throughout the school, and trains staff regarding the development of FBA and BIP documentation in support of Individualized Educational Plans. The principal also made two lead teachers coaches. Additionally, Data Specialists for each cohort were chosen and meet weekly with the Principal to discuss issues from grade planning/inquiry meetings as well as share various data. All of these people are also members of the school's cabinet and turn-key gleaned information to the teachers. This shared leadership has led to the staff establishing a school wide structure of identifying, targeting and assessing students to increase learning outcomes to be used consistently throughout the school.
- School wide inquiry work has resulted in a collaborative environment where teachers are empowered to make decisions aimed at improving student learning. There are five teacher cohorts which meet twice a week and are designed on a "case study" basis. Each week, teachers present a case study, following the Analyzing Student Work/Agenda Template. For example, the inquiry focus for the 6:1:1 teachers is "*students will display appropriate social interactions across multiple settings*". The Inclusion teachers are creating a rubric and universal criteria for admission to the inclusion program. The impact of Professional Learning Communities and collaborative inquiry has resulted in increased SANDI scores throughout cohorts (6:1:1, Freshman/Sophomore and Pre-transition) as well as a steady improvement of teacher practice as measured through administrative observations.